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SHORT STORIES

A MAGAZINE OF SELECT FICTION

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VOLUME XVII.

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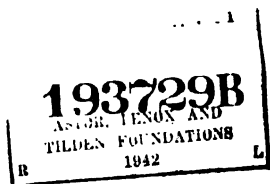
THIS MAGAZINE IS PLANNED TO COVER THE
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ITS SELECTIONS WILL BE OF THE BEST PRO-
CURABLE IN ALL THE VARIOUS LANGUAGES

"Were I called upon to designate that class of composition which should best fulfill the demands of high genius—should offer it the most advantageous field of exertion—I should unhesitatingly speak of the short prose tale. The novel is objectionable from its length. As it cannot be read at one sitting, it deprives itself of the immense force derivable from totality."—EDGAR ALLAN POE.

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THIS NUMBER CONTAINS A MAN-OF-WAR'S MAN'S STORY BY LUCILE LOVELL

AUTHOR OF "NOT OF ANNAPOLIS," "DENNIS, U. S. N.," ETC.

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Short Stories

By the following

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SHORT STORIES

A MAGAZINE OF FACT AND FICTION

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FOIN SAUVAGE *

By GEORGIANA PEEL



ING-A-LING! Ting-a-ling! the convent bells were ringing. Ting-a-ling! Ting-a-ling! came the sweet sounds from the high, white cupola. They floated far away out on the warm summer air, fragrant with the smell of Indian hay, or *Foin Sauvage*, that the "habitants" were cutting in the meadow by the river.

In the distance, the tin roofs of the old French-Canadian city

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N Y P L

glittered in the sunshine, and the great river shone like gold as it glided on majestically to the waters of the Gulf.

The convent lay in its own grounds, carefully guarded by high stone walls, though a good many came in and out of its portals, as it was the "Providence" of the neighborhood, and welcomed the little orphaned ones, and the sick and aged poor of the district. The sunlight filtered through the whole building. It fell in slanting lines in the long passages, with their rush-bot-tomed chairs and spotlessly scrubbed floors. And it crept into the big class-room where Sister St. Stéphanie was sitting. It

shone with misty radiance on the many neat desks and on the blackboard and maps. The statue of the Virgin, with pure, downcast face and robes of heavenly blue, was all resplen-dent with its rays.

Sister St. Stéphanie sat at her desk, and she was tired. It had been a long, hot day and the children had not been attentive. The room was empty now, for its little occupants, in their checked blue pinafores and thick shoes, had all been dis-missed into the garden for the

welcome play before the evening meal. Now she was free to walk in the garden for a little while. Although she was tired, there was no indication of it on the calm face. She arose quietly and

took off the large black apron that shielded her dress, and folding it with mathematical neatness, laid it in her desk, and locking the door of the class-room with the heavy brass key that hung at her waist, pattered off down the long corridor. Sister St. Stéphanie was not as young as she was once, and her figure was portly, but in spite of the lines that come at fifty, it was a face that had been most charming in the springtime of her life. The brown eyes were the same, but the soft rose tints had faded in her cheeks, and the coif of immaculate whiteness covered gray locks now. But nothing could alter the good nun's smile; that was always the same.



She knelt a few minutes at the little oratory on the stairway, and then quietly crossing herself went down the wide veranda steps to the garden. Sister St. Mary Clopas was with the children, who were wending their way to the little spruce wood by the big meadows ; so, free from her responsibilities, the nun took the path to the kitchen-garden. Jean Baptiste, an ancient pensioner of the convent, who was hoeing the long onion beds, bowed humbly and raised a fur cap, so long used that all the fur was worn off, and only the skin remained. Jean had been a mighty hunter, but all that was long past. His withered face, with its stubby white beard, lit up with a pleasant smile. He had been ten years in the convent, doing all sorts of odd jobs, and dearly loved "*ces bonnes dames*," as he called the sisters, but none so well as Sister St. Stéphanie.

The kitchen-garden was his special pride and joy. Here in long rows grew the small onions, which gave such a savory excellence to the golden omelets that the inmates of the convent ate with much relish on feasts and holidays. Further on were the cabbage beds and the carrots with feathery tops. All along the edge of the walk were spicy beds of thyme, mint, marjoram and summer savory. Against the walls were hives, whose inmates buzzed lazily as they came home from the buckwheat fields.

It was pleasant here on the lovely summer afternoons, and a look of sweet content came into the nun's face as, folding her hands within her wide sleeves, she paced quietly up and down the path. From the river came the breeze laden with the incense of the long swaths of hay.

How familiar was that smell to Sister St. Stéphanie. It carried her back thirty years, long years, when she was only sixteen years old. She was not called Sister St. Stéphanie then, but was Gabrielle St. Pierre, the youngest daughter of the respectable merchant of the little village of Sainte Priscelle.

The St. Pierres lived in an old steep-roofed house on the banks of the Ottawa. It was innocent of paint, and gray and weather-beaten with the storms of winter and the rains of many springs. But it made a pleasing background for the many blue pigeons that fluttered along its old brown eaves, and the woods that held it lovingly in their embrace. Hollyhocks grew at its side, showing brilliant scarlet and yellow tints in better contrast with its somberness. It was near the old saw-mill, and the air was always full of the scent of newly cut pine-logs.

But within, the life the little Gabrielle led was dreary enough. Her father and mother were old people, and she was the child of his second marriage, and there were long years between her two elder sisters and herself. Her step-sisters were tall, thin



young women, with the deep, dark eyes and sallow complexions so many Canadians have. They were well content with their life. The busy months of carding, spinning and dyeing wool, working in the garden, with now and again, say in the space of five years, a pilgrimage to some noted chapel or shrine. Once they had gone to Ottawa; that was indeed a thing to be remembered.

The little Gabrielle was different. Her hair was blue-black too, but it had many little ripples in it. Her eyes were big and brown, with a soft, pathetic light in them like the deer in the fir woods, and the flush on her cheek like the wild rose that blossoms on the dusty highway. She had a gentle, loving spirit, and obeyed her mother and father in all things. They were fond of her in their way, and as their store had prospered, "*la petite*" could have more advantages than her sisters. So at eleven years of age she went to a great convent near Montreal, and she was

happy there and learnt many things—to write a delicate, copper-plate hand, to play very sweetly on the piano, and to do endless and gorgeous pieces of woolwork. Her voice, clear and fresh, was an important factor in the convent choir. The nuns loved her well; and little Gabrielle was content that her lot should be cast with theirs one day. For the St. Pierres had always given, when possible, a son or daughter in each generation to the Church. So she accepted this career with the same sweet docility with which she had accepted the dresses they sent her, or the studies they desired her to pursue. At seventeen she came home for a little while, and for a time the life she led was peaceful enough. She made her small room a bower of neatness, and she erected a tiny altar with a statue of the Infant Jesus and two kneeling plaster angels. She always had bouquets of tender wild flowers and little, brilliant wax candles that her father gave her from the store.

Her step-sisters were grave and chill, and Gabrielle felt lonely, but she had no one to tell. In the garden and the wildwood there was joy, and she would escape with Angélique (the homely peasant servant) to pick berries or bring the cows home. Or she would creep over to the large wooden church with its tall twin spires, filled with the faint, sweet smell of incense, and would kneel before the picture of St. Catherine with her wheel, which had been sent from Rome by one of the priests, and lose herself in meditation. The painting, radiant with soft and mellowed tints from that land of art, made a beautiful spot in the new, bare church, and her parents hearing of these quiet hours felt that their choice for the young girl had been good.

But in June of that summer something happened to break the quiet monotony of her existence. One day as M. St. Pierre sat in his shop reading his small weekly paper, while his mild young apprentice attended to the wants of the few customers, a stranger came in. He glanced swiftly around the store, not that there was much to look at—the general country store, with its flaming advertisements for soap and pills, its kegs of nails and coils of rope; the tinware hanging from the ceiling, interspersed with flails and rakes; the long glass show-case on the counter displaying gaudy silk handkerchiefs, ties and cheap dolls; and the general prevailing odor of coal oil and dried apples. The stranger was young, perhaps twenty-three or four, tall and straight, with curly yellow hair and big blue eyes that had almost an infantine look of innocence. He was a gentleman, to old M. St. Pierre

"*un gros monsieur*," most likely from Montreal or Ottawa, his clothes told that. He came up to the fat merchant and asked him, in very tolerable French, where he could get lodgings in the village, as he wanted to fish in the St. André river, where the big pink trout gamboled up and down the foaming brown water.

As M. St. Pierre gazed at the wonderful jointed fishing-rods and new leather gun-cases that a humble "*habitant*" brought in just then, he thought of the good dollars they represented and wondered why the stranger should not occupy the large, empty room in his house. But he did not say it too eagerly. Oh, no! He hemmed and hawed and suggested it by degrees, asking a price that was exorbitant for St. Priscelle, but seemed little enough to the stranger.

"All right," said the young fellow in his pleasant way, "as long as the rooms are clean, and I have lots to eat—*vous voyez*—and I will leave that dirty hotel this afternoon. Are you sure there are lots of trout?"

"*Mais oui*," said the old man, "the river is full of trout, and in the fall the woods are full of those good fat partridges—and, ah! *monsieu'*, what would you say to a bear? *Aléxandre Tassé* saw one last week, four miles back. Hey?"

So the stranger told the merchant his name was Mr. Jack Lawrence, of Montreal, and the storekeeper recognized it as belonging to one of a family of great sugar-refiners, merchant princes in that city, and he was well content.

That afternoon Mr. Jack arrived with his trunks, dogs, gun-cases, and fishing-rods, and the dark old house seemed to wake up from that time. He took his meals with the family, and his sunny smiles, his merry laugh, and his broken French even drew smiles from quiet and faded Madame St. Pierre. He made these hitherto solemn repasts a different thing. He gravely complimented Madame on her excellent pancakes covered with maple syrup. He talked politics in the evening with M. St. Pierre, over the very excellent cigars which he presented to the old storekeeper. He even interested the elder sisters by telling them that he had been to Rome and "yes, actually saw the Pope, and a very pleasant old fellow he was, too," he added, with a merry smile. But to Gabrielle he did not say much. She was too shy. She came in the evening he arrived; she did not know any one was there beyond the usual family circle. How pretty she looked in a pink cotton dress and her long braids hanging down her back, and the brown eyes under their curled lashes. Her

color came to and frô in the creamy cheeks, and she looked modestly at her plate when she had gravely bowed to the stranger.

"Where have you been, my daughter?" said her mother, as she poured out the tea in the thick, handleless white cups.

"I have been decorating the church for the Feast of St. John," said the young girl, in her pretty French. Her tones were low and clear. How delicious, thought Jack to himself, and how mediæval.

The house was full of noise now. Such barking of dogs and chattering of various Canadians, who were good "voyageurs" and knew the woods well, and came to guide the young fellow in his expeditions after trout or bears. The long canoe was put on the wagon and away they would go to the deep lakes in the wood, where the water is so clear and the solemn black fir-trees and white birches mirror themselves in its depths. The men would come home, singing the pretty Canadian folk-songs, in the evening, when the sky was soft and green. Gabrielle got to look for his coming and find the day so long when he was away. Unknown to herself, the child-heart that was slumbering woke up to find itself that of a woman glowing with its first deep, entrancing love. So little does it take to make this change. One or two little strolls in the garden in the evening, the discussion of an illustrated paper, the few words spoken at meal times. Naturally it was all very restricted, for a young French girl has not much liberty; but her smile was sweeter for him and he could make her laugh. Sometimes, at odd moments, she would talk to him so naturally, with such bright wit, that he could hardly believe it was the same timid girl who sat at the family table.

He was so different from the few young men she knew: Albert Roi, the doctor's son, and Joseph Pettier and the lawyer's clerk. He was so spotlessly clean and had wonderful clothes and a different way of eating and drinking and talking, the ways and habits of a polished man of the world.

So the stranger staid on till the late August days, when the maple-trees were beginning to tell of the glorious transfiguration that would take place in their foliage, when they would flame like torches of gold and ruby among the dark fir woods. The apples were getting ripe and the gray partridges drummed in the cedar thickets. He was out fishing all that last morning, but he came into the garden to bid Gabrielle "good-by." Angélique, in her guttural patois, had told him she was there.

Jack knew where she would be, and he went to the end of the garden, where some willows grew beside a spring, and there was a little seat and some beehives. Gabrielle was sitting there, with a little shawl over her head. She seemed to be thinking deeply. So engrossed was she that she did not hear him coming, but when she saw who it was, she gave a great start and the color came leaping into her cheeks.

"I came to say good-by, mademoiselle," said Jack; "I knew where I should find you. You hid yourself, but I could not go without seeing you."

He was going then, and the beautiful brown eyes, in spite of herself, filled with hot tears. There was a moment of silence, and Jack suddenly bent forward and took the slender hand, roughened with work, in his. She tried to draw it away, but he held it fast. The autumn sunlight fell on him as he stood there, with the dim old house behind him.

"Oh, Monsieur Jack, *il ne faut pas, il ne faut pas*," she said trembling, drawing her hand away.

"But, Gabrielle," said Jack hurriedly, "are you not sorry I am going away? I hate to go, for," he said, speaking breathlessly in his emotion, "I have learned to love you so much. Ah, Gabrielle, *je t'aime, je t'aime*," dropping unconsciously into the broken French they always spoke to each other.

She seemed almost as if she would flee away, and the big tears stood on her cheeks.

"You are so walled up here, and so guarded and spied upon I cannot talk to you openly, as a man should—but no, you shall not go, darling Gabrielle, till you tell me you love me a little, and I swear I will come back to you again."

She was, trembling like a leaf now, but she turned her dear eyes to him and there the answer was written so plainly.

"Darling," said Jack, as the long whistle of the steamer was heard, coming round the point, "say one little word, for I must run to catch the boat. You love me, don't you, dear little Gabrielle? Say my name just once."

"*Oui, ah oui*, Jack," came the answer, almost in a whisper—how sweetly she said the English word "Jack."

Nearer and nearer came the throb of the paddle-wheels of the steamer. Jack bent forward and raised the cold, little hand to his lips, and kissed it so tenderly and lovingly. Until he told of his love, he did not know its deep and overwhelming tide.

"I will write," he said, looking back at the girlish figure and the beautiful young face, so full of love for him.

He went down the short path to the wharf, holding his hat in his hand and smiling on her, though there was a graver and more earnest look on the merry young face than had ever been there before.

The sound of the paddle-wheels stopped for a few minutes, then went on again, grew fainter, fainter, till all was quiet. The sun had set, and Gabrielle went into the house.

The brilliant fall passed, and then the long winter came, and for some time Gabrielle lived in a dream. A dream known only to herself. But she never got a letter. All through the winter months when the whole earth was covered with a snowy garment, scintillating with myriads of crystals, and the fir-trees stood black against the whiteness. When the sky was steely in its clearness, and the stars shone with a glory unknown in more temperate climes, and the foxes trotted softly across the firm snow in the glorious moonlight. The timbers of the old house creaked and cracked with the intensity of the cold, and the wood fire roared all winter long in the great cast-iron stove with a sad wailing sound. What cared Gabrielle for cold when she could cherish her dream all to herself, and no one intermeddled with its sweetness? But unknown to her, they had guessed her secret, and the storm burst upon her after the New Year.

The first letters had come from Jack. M. St. Pierre had opened them without scruple, and thinking they were only the effusions of a boyish love affair said nothing about them to "*la petite*." Her thoughts were otherwise employed. When the letters became more frequent and glowing with a manly love that the old man could in no way misconstrue, he thought it time to interfere, and confided in Madame St. Pierre. She was overwhelmed with the perfidy of Gabrielle, and there was a consultation with M. le Curé in the cold, gloomy "salon," with its slippery horsehair furniture, and oleographs of the pope, and sacred pictures, its dreadful bead mats and laboriously crocheted curtains.

Poor little Gabrielle was called in and the storm burst upon her, terrible in its fierceness. She stood there trembling like the aspens in the wood, facing the three stern, hard faces, and listened to the scornful words and bitter taunts heaped upon her.

She, promised to the Church, had been deceitful and underhand! She had spent the summer as no modest girl should,

in covert interviews with a heretic! She, whom they thought so pure and good and open as the day, had made all sorts of promises to this light-of-love! She, with whom they had taken so much pains, on whom they had lavished all their little store, had thus repaid them! If she repented not of her evil ways, she should be no daughter to them, but an alien and an outcast!

Gabrielle said not a word, only grew whiter and whiter and looked with terror at them. M. le Curé was kinder than her father and mother, for he said quietly :

"I know Gabrielle of old, leave her to herself for reflection; the good God in his mercy will bring her to a better mind. The saints also had been woefully tempted."

And Gabrielle looked at him gratefully, and when her father and mother asked her if she had anything to say, she murmured with white lips—

"*Non, non,*" and crept up stairs to the little cold room where the frost drew beautiful ferns and palms on its many-paned windows, and sat in dumb agony by her bed. All the light of life seemed gone out, and she noticed in a strange, vivid way the knots and lines of the bare scrubbed floors, and the curious bright colored pieces of print in the patchwork quilt. She could do nothing. She could not write to him, as she did not know his address, and added to all her misery, she had never received from him one little line. For her father and mother in their craft had not mentioned the letters, they had only spoken as if their knowledge had come from the outside world. But she would be true to him; he would come back some day. When she tried to take up her daily life, she found she was in deep disgrace. No one spoke to her except when absolutely necessary. Only Angélique or "*le fou*," a poor half-witted farm-hand, addressed her with kindness. Her sisters, narrow and jealous in their nature, turned from her as polluted.

Gabrielle passed many hours in the kitchen, patiently helping Angélique, finding in the making of bread and washing of dishes some distraction for her thoughts. It was warm in there, the air was heavy with the smell of pea-soup, and "*le fou*" sat by the great stove, rubbing his curious boots of undyed leather with pork fat and laughing to himself, with his little bleared eyes half shut.

M. le Curé, who had been her good friend before, spoke to her rarely, and then with a subdued sadness that was more keen than

wrath. So Lent passed, and it was nearly Easter. The Canadian spring that changes winter into summer with magic touch had begun to breathe upon the land. The snow had melted, and only a few dirty patches lay on the northerly side of the hills. The spruce-trees were putting forth tender green tips, and the purple buds were swelling on the white birch-trees. The crows cawed to each other in the elms by the river, and the "habitants" were making sugar in their quaint kettles in the maple groves.

Tempted by the sunshine, Gabrielle went out into the garden to the little seat by the beehives, where she had seen him last. There was a strange agony of pleasure in doing this. The downy catkins hung on the willows, and the first green things were pushing up through the earth. Gabrielle sat with her hands folded looking at the great, wide river rolling on, with now and then a block of ice on its black surface. How well she remembered the stroke of the paddle-wheels which had borne him away.

"*Mon dieu ! mon dieu !*" she cried, clasping her hands still tighter.

There was a click at the gate, and M. le Curé came slowly down the path. M. le Curé was a good man. He had come from France in his early days, and was superior to his flock by birth and education. But he was a man of great strength of character, stern and unflinching. He would have joyed in being a martyr in the early Church. His classic face was wan and emaciated, and his soutane was old and threadbare. Tales were told in the village of his chastisements and his prayers at midnight in the church; the people respected him, though suspicious of him too. He was marvellously kind to the poor, and would drive miles and miles in the pitiless winter nights to visit the sick and dying. He came up to Gabrielle and scanned her face carefully. It bore unmistakable signs of bitter suffering, and there were lines that should not have been on a face scarce seventeen.

"My child," he said gently, "you are in great misery. Let me talk to you, let me help you."

At these words of unexpected kindness the tears rose to Ga-



brielle's eyes and her lips trembled. The wind blew M. le Curé's long gray hair from his forehead and waved the worn black soutane.

"My child," he said, his deep voice full of emotion, "could I but show you a place of peace, a place of rest! What would you say if I told you I too have suffered as you do, and conquered, and gained an infinite peace, an infinite glory! The struggle was bitter—yea, even to death. Think, think of the glory and beauty reserved for those who have given up father, mother, child, yea lover, too, for God! Now, we need not suffer boiling oil and crucifixions in the flesh, but we can in spirit, and offer that which is the marrow of our bones and the life-blood of our hearts. The deeper the anguish, the more precious the offering! My child, my child! thou, bearing the name of the great angel who stands in the 'presence of God,' wilt thou not give thyself in thy youth to stand in His presence now and join the ranks of the bright and blessed ones in thy first purity and innocence? Human affection is good and sweet too, but love of God undivided is better! And remember, oh, remember!" said the priest, sinking his voice to deeper and still graver tones, "how unfit you are for the kingdom of God if putting your hand to the plough you look backward. You will be cut off from the true life as I rend these buds from this branch." And he stripped the tender young leaves from an aspen branch with such force that they fell pitifully here and there on the brown earth.

Gabrielle shuddered and looked down at the little leaves fluttering about in the chill spring wind.

"My child, let me comfort you," said M. le Curé, his rugged face lighting up with enthusiasm. "It is near the holy Easter-tide; come cast thyself at the foot of the Cross and bring thy sorrows to Him who suffered all. Oh! come to thy Easter Communion as the Bride of Christ, and, oh, the greater the temptation, the greater the triumph! This trial is the furnace of thy life. Come through it in His strength, and what joy will be thine!"

He left her, passing swiftly down the garden path. The stern priest had struck a different chord. He had not taunted her and upbraided her. The girl's heart was so weary, so weary! Perhaps he spoke truly. She stood in deep thought under the willow, then turned suddenly, went swiftly through the gate and across the grassy open plot into the church. How distinctly trifles strike us at such times. The tall twin towers, sheathed in

tin, seemed to move against the cold blue sky, flecked with gray clouds. Inside, the church was getting dim, and was filled with the smell of incense and the odor of spruce branches, that all Canadian churches have. The old sacristan was moving about putting new candles in the sconces. Gabrielle went quickly over to the altar, all draped in black, where the big plaster groups of the Entombment stood, and knelt there long and still. It grew quite dark, and the sacristan stood clinking his keys to arrest her attention. When Gabrielle entered the house supper was ready. She took her place silently at the table. The fare was the Lenten one of bread, dried apples and bitter green tea that simmered all day in the great uncouth tin teapot. But she heeded none of these things. The family ate almost in silence, and then at the bidding of Madame St. Pierre sank on their knees before the plain black crucifix on the wall for the "*chapelet du soir*." The light burned dim in the little coal-oil lamp, and no sound was heard but the sad monotone of Madame St. Pierre and the click of the beads as they fell from her fingers, and the murmured responses that came at intervals from the rest of the group with a dreary and mechanical cadence. When they rose from their knees Gabrielle left the room and "*le fou*" followed her into the entry, and with a look of pleasure in his little pig-like eyes, slipped a note into her hand. "*Pour vous,*" he said, with a guttural laugh—"pour vous." No one saw this little incident, but Gabrielle's heart gave a great leap and she fled up to her room and shut the door tight, bolting it to make it secure. Then she looked at the letter.

It was square and white, with firm black writing on it. So unlike the letters they generally received. Cheap, yellow envelopes, with thin scratchy writing on them in pale ink. She opened it quickly and the words burnt themselves on her brain:

MY OWN DARLING—Why have you never written one word to me? I have written again and again, giving the address carefully each time, and have never had a single line. I know



there is something underhand going on. But, dear one, I am quite near you. "*Le fou*" and Angélique have told me what you have been enduring. I shall be at the landing down by the river to-night at ten. Come as you love me, my own poor little darling.

Your most loving,

JACK.

"I shall be at the landing down by the river at ten." Had she gone mad, and was she dreaming? She would see his face once more. Gabrielle held the letter in her hand a few minutes. Remember, it was her first love-letter. She gently passed her hand over it almost as if caressing the lifeless thing.



C.M.P.

Then holding it over the candle burnt it deliberately, till it curled in blackened scrolls on the floor, where it seemed to writhe in torture like a living thing. Then she went to a little trunk in the corner, her school-girl trunk, meagre and cheap, covered with yellow paper and shiny black bands. She unlocked it, lifted the lid and found a cardboard box and laid it on the bed. How pitiful were its contents! A penknife that he had left behind, a few fish-hooks, a gaudy chocolate box (he had given it to her when he had come from Ottawa one time last summer), and a few flowers, brown and scentless. She covered the box again, and sank on her knees

by the little bed with its gay cotton quilt. She staid there how long? An eternity? But her thin, little hands were clasped over her face with such force that they left livid marks on the white cheeks. Presently the old clock struck ten, with rusty groaning of its works, and getting up she slipped quietly down the stairs. How they creaked! The door by which she must leave the house was not locked, as "*le fou*" had purposely seen to its being unfastened. The night air struck chill, and the frogs were croaking plaintively in the swamps.

Gabrielle sped down the path, light and sure of foot, clasping the cardboard box to her breast. It was bright moonlight, and the great elm-trees cast black shadows on the silver water, and

their roots looked like twisted snakes. By the biggest elm Jack was standing. Yes, Jack, and the moonlight fell on his light hair, making almost an aureole about his head.

"Oh, God! help me to be firm in this time of need. I am so weak, so weak," Gabrielle prayed. (Had not evil spirits once been angels of Light!)

Jack gave a sudden leap.

"Gabrielle! Gabrielle!" he said, coming forward with arms outstretched. How beautiful he was with the love-light in his eyes.

"No, Jack, you may not kiss me," said Gabrielle, in such a sad, sad tone. "It is all, all—*tout fini pour toujours*."

She stood quite still with that strange, unearthly look on her face, holding out the cardboard box.

"You are mad, Gabrielle," said Jack, looking at her in amazement, "they have turned your mind with their bigoted cruelty. Oh, I do not believe you! Come away with me to the great, wide world, away from this terrible, morbid faith that is warping your whole young life. In a wider atmosphere you will find there is no just hindrance to our marriage.

"Come with me, darling," he said, so tenderly, so gently, "away from this death in life. Dear one, in my love you will find all this false reasoning disappear like a bad dream. My poor little persecuted one! Come, come to-night on the steamer. I know the stewardess on the boat; she is a kind, good woman, and will take care of you till we get to Carrillon, and then we will be married by the rector of the English church and in your church, too. It will be so simple, darling, dear one. Speak, speak, Gabrielle!" he said, his voice trembling in his great agitation.

"Do not say more, Jack," she said, her voice sunk almost to a whisper, "my temptation is bitter enough. It cannot, cannot be. I will never marry you—you will never understand—*jamais, jamais!*"

"Gabrielle, Gabrielle, you are not in your right mind; you are crazed by the treatment you have undergone. I swear, by all that is holy, I will be the kindest, tenderest husband in the world to you, my own. Are you adamant, or ice, that you love me no longer? Did not God give Eve to Adam? Why should marriage have been blessed; can you deny that?"

Jack was getting very angry now. But, as he looked at the slight little figure, so frail, so scrupulously neat in its old-

fashioned gray dress, the anger melted and pity came instead. He drew near her and, sinking his voice to its sweetest, gentlest tones, almost as a mother might speak to a suffering child, in accents to move the coldest heart :

"Darling, have pity on me, I who have hungered and thirsted for you day and night, who have written so patiently and been so deceived. Let me plead with your father, or come now, now with me. Your life will be so bright, my people are kind and good-hearted. Oh, Gabrielle, Gabrielle darling, come, come let me shelter you in my love. Have you ceased to love me?" He looked pale now and so wistful.

Gabrielle seemed to swallow something, and then her voice rang out clear and firm, with a note of exultation :

"Oh, dear one! You will never understand. It is not my father or mother or the priest who prevents me now. At first they did, but now it is of my own free will. I will give myself to the Church. You will never know the agony I have passed through, but I have been helped. Do you not think my soul yearned for your love! But it may not be. That was the best life had to offer, and that is my sacrifice to God!"

And turning swiftly to Jack, her face almost supernatural in its calm and beauty, she raised her hand :

"May the good God bless and keep you evermore, evermore. Adieu, beloved, adieu——." Letting the box drop she fled swiftly up the hill.

Poor, benighted little Gabrielle, we say. But we may say that of all those who have suffered for their faith in the course of ages. She had only lived up to her ideal, after all.

Jack turned, and stumbling like a drunken man, called "*le fou*," who was in waiting, and rowed swiftly over the river in the silent night. He saw that nothing he could do now would be of any use.

And the cardboard box lay neglected under the cedars, and the spring rains fell on it relentlessly, till it dropped to pieces.

Gabrielle crept up to the little room with its dormer windows, and fell upon the floor unconscious. Nature cannot bear too great a strain. The mice crept fearlessly about undisturbed by the silent figure. None knew of what had happened that night. Only M. le Curé, and he was a man who spoke seldom. Gabrielle heeded not the altered demeanor of her parents and sisters. She moved about her tasks almost unconscious of them, only hastening the time of her joining the sisterhood she pre-

ferred, for with M. le Curé's help, she became one of an order that tend the tiny children and the helpless old and aged ones of earth.

And Jack, you may read his name again among those who belong to the great commercial interests of the world. He is a good man and well known. Yes, he is married and has sons at college and in business. But he, too, may have his memories, for all we know. His purse is always open to good causes, he gives abundantly to "those excellent women," as he calls the Sisters of Charity.

But all this is so long ago, thirty-seven years or more, and time is very merciful. Sister St. Stéphanie knows great peace and love in her busy life. The little ones love her and trot after her, holding withered little bunches of flowers in their hot chubby hands "pour Soeur St. Stéphanie," and the old people pour out their garrulous troubles in her willing ear.

Ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling! the convent bell is ringing for the children's supper and Sister St. Stéphanie must go in now. The wagons are coming up from the long meadows laden with new cut hay.

Ah, me! what memories the Indian grass that grows by the great river will always bring back to her in the bright Canadian summer-time.





BY ALICE COMYNS CARR



O, no, it's no use trying to convince me that the thing is not just as bad as it possibly could be," said a middle-aged lady of dignified appearance, replying, presumably, to some remark from the gentleman sitting opposite to her beside the fire. "It all comes of this modern enthusiasm for the stage, my dear Richard. It's a very great danger to society, believe me, I daresay, as you say, many another heir to a good old name has been ruined just in the same way as my poor boy is being ruined; but of what comfort is that to me?"

"But I didn't say 'ruined,' Mrs. Curzon," insisted the gentleman. "I said that, grave as the matter was, I hoped you were looking at it too seriously—that many another young man had had a fancy of this sort and had been cured of it."

The poor lady shook her head dejectedly. "You don't know Arthur as well as I do," said she. "He's so obstinate; and the more I disapprove of a thing, the more he is determined to do it."

The gentleman smiled quietly. He was a quiet-looking man of about forty-five years, with thick and curly hair of an iron-gray, strongly marked, handsome features, and a bearing particularly dignified and distinguished.

"I'm afraid that's often the manner of boys toward their mothers—the young villains," said he. "I must try and see what I can make of him—though I'm afraid I haven't made him fear me as much as I might have done," he added, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Ah, but I really should be infinitely obliged if you would speak to him, Sir Richard," replied the lady. "If his poor father had been alive perhaps it might never have happened; and

* A selection from "The Pall Mall Magazine."

a man's impression on the matter may have some influence on him—though, to tell you the truth, I'm afraid he is most terribly infatuated; he declares that she is the most perfect lady possible, and that he can only hope to persuade her to let him introduce her to the world as his wife."

"To persuade her? Then she has not accepted him yet?" said Sir Richard.

"So he says. But no doubt it's she who is leading him on to do it. The poor boy's whole estimate of her is probably only due to his admiration of her," answered the mother.

"No, no, you mustn't think so poorly of a woman without knowing her," said Sir Richard gravely. "You cannot tell that she is unworthy of inspiring him with a really noble passion. There is after all no reason why her being on the stage should unfit her for being his wife—in itself. I know more than one actress who would answer to Arthur's description of a perfect lady."

"Do you?" answered the mother incredulously. "I didn't know that you knew any actresses. But surely, surely, they are never refined?"

One would have thought that Sir Richard would have smiled, but he did not: his brow became suddenly knit, and he said shortly, "Yes, Mrs. Curzon, some of them are refined, I think."

"Clever—of course I don't deny that," answered she, unconvinced. "And that goes for so much nowadays—unfortunately sometimes, I must say. People will receive almost anybody who is a lion. But refined?"

Sir Richard did not reply; he seemed to have sunk, for the moment, into a brown study as he leant forward to the fire; it was a chilly, treacherous May afternoon, and the drawing-room in Eaton Place was not warm.

"Clever—of course no one could deny Miss Reynolds' being clever," continued the mother; "and fascinating—yes, and beautiful. In fact, I daresay there *are* people in her own set who might think Arthur highly favored. But, do you know, her being so charming only makes it all the more dangerous; and then she's older than he is too. No, she'll never let him go!"

If Mrs. Curzon had not been so preoccupied, she would have noticed something strange about her visitor. He sat as though transfixed over the fire.

"It makes it all much more dangerous, doesn't it?" repeated she after a while.

"Yes," repeated he at last, mechanically, "it makes it all much more dangerous."

He rose, rousing himself, and said, "You had not told me the lady was Miss Reynolds."

"Oh, surely, I must have done so?" answered she. "Yes; Miss Margaret Reynolds. And every one tells me she really is most fascinating. The Castletons receive her, and I believe many other people. But that makes no difference. Arthur must *not* marry her, Sir Richard."

She looked up searchingly—almost beseechingly—into his face. There was silence.

"No," answered he at last, without looking at her: "Arthur must not marry her."

"I am glad you see the matter as I do," she replied with a sigh. "Then you will speak to him?"

"No," he answered, shaking his head. "That would probably be quite useless. As you say, she is clever—and most fascinating. I will speak to *her*."

"To her! Then you know her?" asked she, a little surprised.

"I used to know her a few years ago," he answered.

"And you think she will listen to you?"

"I think she will listen to me," he replied gravely. "You say she has not accepted him yet? As far as I can foresee, I think she will not do so at all."

Mrs. Curzon was not an emotional woman, but she held out both her hands.

"Thank you," she said simply. "The boy will mind for a bit, but I will make it up to him. It *must* be the best thing for him."

Sir Richard had moved towards the door; he had taken one of the offered hands and pressed it hastily, but with a hard, firm grip.

"Yes," he said, "there is no doubt about it that it's the only thing for him. And he is young—he will very soon forget the pain in a new pleasure."

He said the last words a trifle bitterly, but Mrs. Curzon was still too much engrossed with her own anxiety to notice it, and with a parting greeting he hurried out of the room.

But in the street, though he covered the pavement with his usual even stride, and held his head erect with his usual martial bearing—there was that in his face that puzzled a casual acquaintance whom he passed, and whom—strange that it could have been said of the most courteous of men—he failed to greet!

And when he had hailed a passing hansom and had told the driver to drive towards Finchley, he sat back in the cab with his eyes fixed on the horse's ears, and once more omitted to notice one of his numerous acquaintance driving past; he sat in a brown study, and the hand that rested on the doors of the cab trembled a little, and the cigar that it held went out although he had only just lit it. The way that he was going was so familiar! The florist there, where he had always got out to buy her some flowers, the news agent whence he had bought her the evening paper—whenever it had something pretty in it about herself. All so familiar and yet so strange! Could it really be five years since he had watched his cab-horse toil up this hill, since he had bowled along these unfrequented lanes to the old house there, where she had so long chosen to live retired? She? Yes, what need to name her? She had always been the only "she" that had existed for him. Was she still the same? Still the same sweet, capricious, tender, womanly creature, as full of tears as of laughter, quick to pity, yet striking as a ray of sunlight across the world? Still simple and girlish in spite of her thirty years, full of interest in every little trivial thing that was of moment, stored as her mind was with the subtle understanding of the greatest? Was she still there in her quiet home, surrounded by the dumb animals she loved, with the few friends around her whom she allowed to break her solitude? Who could tell? It was five years since all that. *He* was one of these friends once—but now! and his face assumed a stern expression as the cab turned down the last turning. He had been thinking of what *she* would be like, of how she would receive him; but now he thought of what he would say to *her*. Ah, how little he had ever thought to enter that house again! How little Mrs. Curzon guessed what she had asked of him! But it must be faced—it was clearly his duty to save the lad from such a fate. Ah, no; she could no longer be the same now as she had been when he knew her.

Yet she *was* just the same; and as she sat there upon her divan, feeding an eager little fox-terrier, while the visitor whom she little dreamed of seeing was slowly advancing towards her, the smile that she threw across to the young man opposite was just as bewildering as of old; and Sir Richard, if he had seen it, would have been—well, to say the least of it—uneasy, for the young man was Arthur Curzon.

But they were not idle: she was feeding her dog with biscuit as reward for tricks performed; and he had a low easel in front of

him with a canvas, on which he was vainly trying to fix those charming and wayward features. And they were not alone: there was a young girl in the room arranging flowers—a very young girl, tall and dark and a little angular, but with luminous fawn's eyes which she lifted quickly now and then upon the young man when he was not looking.

"No; you've had quite enough," Miss Reynolds was saying to the terrier, who still stood with his ears pricked in an attitude of expectancy. "Go away and lie down." Then, with an abrupt change, "May," said she, "when does your violin master come?"

"Oh, Miss Reynolds," sighed the young man, "if you *could* keep still only for five minutes! I'm just doing the mouth."

Miss Reynolds settled herself resignedly, and the girl answered, "At half-past four, aunt. And I haven't practiced a bit!"

"You lazy child!" declared the lady. "Go away and do it at once, then! You don't suppose I'm going to pay a guinea a lesson to that fat old German for nothing! And when you come back bring something sturdy out of the garden for your flower vase; it stoops as badly as you do yourself."

The girl blushed and glanced at the young man to see if he had heard.

"I can't get the tall things alone," said she, pouting.

"Oh, I'll come and help you presently," cried he. "Miss Reynolds won't give me more than another hour at this, I know, and then I'll come out."

"Thank you," murmured the girl; and her aunt added laughing, "An hour, indeed! Don't you suppose that I'm going to be made a martyr of for a whole hour. Half an hour, May—so get your practising done, child."

The girl went out, and the young man, rising quickly and coming towards his sitter, said in an aggrieved tone, "Made a martyr of! How cruel of you!"

"Ah! Stop—don't come any nearer," said she, with a look of pained apprehension on her face. "There's paint on your fingers, and it always makes me"—she paused a moment and then added, with a quaint little gesture—"feel faint!"

"Does it?" said he, with a concerned air. "Then I had better put the thing away. I'd rather talk to you."

He moved towards the easel, but she stopped him.

"Oh no—don't," said she. "That would be a pity. It's just beginning to get on a little. I don't mind the paint if you don't come near me."

He stood undecided, the brush in his hand. He had a pleasant, boyish face—its youthfulness a little marred by the effect of late hours, but frank and simple, one might say in spite of himself, for there was an affectation of weariness about his manner that was not—or should not have been—of his age.

"Why *did* you suggest that I should begin your portrait, if you don't like the smell of paint?" said he.

She looked at him a moment gravely; then the smile broke forth anew. "Well, you're here so much," said she. "And we had rather exhausted our subjects of conversation, hadn't we?"

He blushed.

"I didn't think so," he said. "But then, of course, I could sit here all day watching you only, or at least listening to the smallest thing that you might choose to say to me."

"What, without saying a word yourself?" said she. "I don't believe it! No, you would want to say something, and that would spoil all."

"Try me," said he, excitedly, and moved a step nearer.

"Ah! the paint!" cried she, holding out both hands as in horror. "*Please* don't forget again!"

He fell back muttering something, and sat down.

"Of course, now that May is here, it's much easier to manage," she went on. "I have no compunction in leaving her to entertain you as long as I like, for I know you're admirably well amused."

"That's very kind of *you*," murmured he a trifle pettishly.

Her face grew serious.

"Yes, it is *very* kind of me," said she. "I can tell you it isn't every young fellow I would trust with May. She's one of the sweetest flowers that grow in this dusty old garden of a world, and I wouldn't let her rub up against anybody that I thought would take the freshness off her if I could help it. You may think yourself highly honored that I consider you fit to be her companion."

"Oh, I do—I do indeed," cried the lad, his momentary ill-humor melting away. "I think she is altogether one of the most charming and original girls I ever met. One couldn't be dull with her."

The goddess smiled upon him again.

"That's right," she said; "I knew you were too good a lad not to appreciate her—and not to be fit to be trusted with her. I'm sure you find much cleverer things to say to her than you do to say to me, and amuse her much better."

"Come, that's *very* unkind," said he in an aggrieved tone.

She took the terrier on her lap and smacked him; he had been tearing a piece of drapery with his teeth.

"Fiddlesticks!" said she, laughing. "How can a boy like you expect to be able to amuse a woman like me? Why, I've seen no end of you go through your little antics, you know," added she, setting the dog upon his hind legs and shaking her finger at him; "and much cleverer performers than you, some of them! You're no actor at all."

"I don't want to be," said he gloomily.

"Oh yes, you do," laughed she. "Everybody wants to be a good actor sometimes! And you might be a very good actor to some people. To May, for instance," added she, glancing at him quickly. "You could convince *her*. Mind you don't try to convince her of anything you're not quite sure of. But you can't convince me, you see. I'm too old a stager."

He sighed.

"I wish you could be serious!" said he.

She rose with the dog in her arms and carried him across the room.

"There, go," said she, opening the French window: "go to May—you foolish little fellow."

The dog bounded out on to the lawn and she came slowly back to the fire.

"Serious?" repeated she, the smile still flitting to and fro on her face. "Well, I wonder must one always put on a cap and gown and get up into a pulpit before one can be serious?" She looked at him a moment gravely. "Oh, you silly!" she said shaking her head at him. "Can't you see that I've been serious for the last ten minutes? Can't you see that, instead of being unkind—as you said now—I am being very kind to you? What *would* have been unkind, would have been to take what was only a temporary exaltation, a fancy born of a romantic young spirit, for sober, deep reality. That would have been doing you a grave injustice—that would have been taking a mean advantage of you. You see, I like you too well."

He hung his head, crestfallen.

"I think I'd almost rather you didn't like me quite so well, then," he said. "But I suppose there's some one else."

A quick shadow passed across her face. Then she smiled.

"Is that an absolutely necessary conclusion?" she said.

He blushed; but a moment afterward he grumbled again:

"If you meant to turn me out, why have you been playing with me all these weeks?"

She was standing behind him, and she looked down on him now with something tender, half-pitying—almost motherly—in her gaze, although he could not see it.

"Play with you?" repeated she. "Have I really been playing with you?" And there was a faint smile in her eyes that faded as she added, after a pause—very gently, "Tell me, do you remember where you were going when I first met you? Are you less happy now than you were then?"

He blushed again, and for an instant his brow clouded. But she had spoken truly when she had said he was a good lad, and his face cleared as she laid her hand lightly on his shoulder, and said cheerily, "No, there shall be no playing with you here, and you shall not be turned out so long as you're a good boy, I assure you." She stepped in front of the easel as she spoke, and added, with mock horror, "Though I certainly am the most good-natured woman in the world for letting you stay another hour under my roof after this atrocious libel that you've made upon me."

"I know it's awful," said he, laughing in spite of himself. "I'll throw it away—and never do it again."

May's voice came rippling in at the window. She was laughing with the dog.

"Then that's a bargain?" said Miss Reynolds, looking at him.

He met her eyes and understood.

"Yes," murmured he.

There was a knock at the door, and at the same time the young girl appeared at the window.

"Aren't you coming?" said she, and, after a little shy pause, added, "aunt?"

Arthur Curzon went toward her, and as he did so the door opened and the maid entering presented a card to her mistress.

The color fled from the face of Miss Reynolds for an instant, but she said quietly, "Show the gentleman in," and advanced with outstretched hand as Sir Richard passed into the room.

His face was set and severe, and he merely bowed at first; but her eyes constrained him, and he took the hand, murmuring some vague words of greeting.

"I am very glad to see you, Sir Richard," said she, cordially. "Do you know Mr. Curzon? Sir Richard Fenn. And this is my niece. May, come here."

The girl advanced shyly and gave her hand, and then retreated quickly to the window again, where the young man, after nodding awkwardly, stood waiting to let her out. His heart, too, had stood still, for he knew this visitor but too well, and had quickly guessed the cause of this unexpected call, and wished—more than ever since his scene with Miss Reynolds—that he could prevent it. But since he could not, the easiest thing he could do was to get out of the way; and he did it—promptly.

"Won't you sit down?" said the hostess, when the young people had bustled out with some lame excuse. And she added—her own easy manner entirely restored—"It's a very long time since you were here last."

He did as he was bid—he sat down. He had not opened his lips. What he had meant to say on presenting himself had faded from his mind; he could only look at her. Yes, she was just the same; age had not laid the lightest finger on that blonde head, nor drawn any but the sweetest lines upon that pale, fair skin; her smile was just as sudden, just as radiant, just as lovable, and changed just as swiftly as of old to that dreamy wistfulness that was specially her own. He had seen it so change as he had come in; he had seen her color pale. She was the same—the same sensitive, subtle, quickly-feeling, quickly-seeing creature; and yet, was it possible that she should be the same?

"Yes, it's some time since I was here last," repeated he, finding his voice when he became conscious of the silence, and that the sensitive face was growing a little troubled beneath his gaze. "Five years, I think."

"Is it so long?" said she, quietly. "Dear me, how time flies! Of course—May is grown up."

"Your niece?" asked he. But carelessly—his eyes fixed on herself.

"Yes," she answered. And then there was a pause.

He gazed as in a dream, and she suffered the gaze with averted eyes, but with the shadow of her smile lingering on her lips.

"Well?" she said at last, a film of mischief lightly overlying her sweet seriousness; "am I so very much aged, Sir Richard?"

He started and withdrew his eyes. "I beg your pardon," he murmured.

"Oh, you need not!" laughed she. "But you are not going to be so very ungallant as to pretend that you haven't even *seen* me these five years?"

She looked straight at him now for an answer.

"Oh, no, no!" murmured he awkwardly. "No—indeed!"

"You have seen me—often?" asked she again, carelessly enough, but with a little pause before the last word, that made it, while a question, an assertion, too.

"Well, yes," he admitted feebly—"pretty often."

"In *all* my parts?" she insisted sweetly.

"I should say so," he said reluctantly.

"Ah!" she sighed, leaning back in her chair, still with that bewildering smile in her eyes. "Then you oughtn't to be so very much shocked at the change in my appearance, Sir Richard. Though, to be sure, I suppose *you* would say that the stage conceals the advance of years."

"Indeed, my dear Miss Reynolds," cried poor Sir Richard aghast, "I never said any such thing. I never dreamed of any such thing! I assure you—'pon my honor, I never saw you look better, younger, handsomer than you do to-day."

"Oh! thank you, thank you! that's enough," laughed she. "I was quite downcast at the way you looked at me when you came in. We poor actresses are *obliged* to think a little of that sort of thing, you know. But since you are *agreeably* surprised—well, of course, that's all right. But talking of agreeable surprises—your visit is one, I'm sure. I'm dying of curiosity till I know what lucky chance brings you to my door again."

He was silent. He had thought he could get it all over in five minutes—and now he couldn't even begin. How was he to tell her the reason?—yet how dared he invent any other false and futile reason which she would see through at once?

"I see you know my old friend Mrs. Curzon's son," he began lamely enough, and disregarding her question.

She laughed.

"You won't tell me?" she said. "Never mind—I won't try and find out. I am very much obliged to the chance, and there's an end. Arthur Curzon? Yes, he's a nice lad, though a little spoilt, poor fellow. So you know his mother? Rather a martinet, isn't she?"

A frown crossed Sir Richard's broad brow.

"Is that what her son says of her?" asked he.

Miss Reynolds glanced at him.

"He doesn't say so to *me*," said she quietly, taking up some fancy work that lay on the table.

He felt his blood tingle: he was rebuked.

"I have heard it casually mentioned by others," she continued,

"but I've no doubt they are quite mistaken; people usually are. I've no doubt the poor lady is not in the least more fidgety over him than is quite right and natural for a mother over an only son."

"No, I think not," agreed Sir Richard.

They sat silent awhile—he gazing at the fire, she working steadily.

At last she looked up.

"I said I wouldn't try to find out the chance that has brought you here to-day," she said, with something just a tiny bit malicious—or as nearly so as it could be—in her smile, "but I've guessed it in spite of myself. Arthur Curzon has gone a-wooing, 'whether his mother would let him or no,' and the sad fate that we all know of awaits him. You have come from your friend Mrs. Curzon to save her son from me."

There was a pause.

"Well, if you ask me——" he began.

"But I don't ask you," she interrupted quickly: "I *tell* you."

She paused again. The smile had faded; there was a strange expression in her eyes.

"I confess I should not have expected it of you," she said gently. "We were good friends once, and I did not think you shared the prejudices of your class."

"I don't," he began again eagerly.

But again she broke in

"If you don't, why are you here?" she said with sudden energy.

He turned away his head, for she was looking at him with piercing eyes. But there must have been something in his face that troubled her—touched her—for the sweetness came back to her own face, though he did not see it.

"No, you had better confess it," she said, in her own soft voice, that had the ripple of laughter through its sweetness: "you have come to beg me not to marry Arthur Curzon. But I want to know why you don't ask him not to marry *me*?"

"Because I am not so foolish as to suppose he would listen to me," said Sir Richard simply.

She laughed softly.

"Thank you for the compliment," said she. "And you thought I would listen?"

"I hoped so," he answered.

"Wasn't that hoping a good deal?" she asked, searching for

a particular shade in the mass of silks on the table. "What reason could you have for supposing that I would give up such a good match?"

She spoke very simply: yet surely, if he had not been so crest-fallen, he, who knew her once so well, would have noted something in the voice that did not match the words.

"None," answered he, "excepting that I know you. And that, knowing you, I believe you will do what is right."

"Right!" repeated she, raising her eyebrows. "What? Right that if I love this young man"—he winced, and she saw it, but she went on unmoved—"and he loves me, that I should give him up just to please you?"

"Believe me, I don't expect you to do anything to please me, Miss Reynolds," said he stiffly.

"Well, then, to please his mother," she added. "You see he's a very good match for an actress—and I shall have to leave the stage some day. I haven't laid by much, Sir Richard, and I must think of my future."

He rose, frowning, and stood with his back to the fire.

"I suppose he has plenty of money—whether his mother will let him or no?" she asked, looking up at him.

"Oh, I believe so," he answered shortly.

"Of course he's not overburdened with brains," she went on with an air of deep consideration, "and he has tried to 'see life' a little too much. But then I always have thought that it's happiest for the woman to be the better horse—she has the worst of it anyhow. And as for his having 'seen life,' between you and me, Sir Richard, I think he fancies he has seen a great deal more than he has. Yes, do you know, I think Arthur as good an average young aristocrat as you can expect to meet with."

She looked at him again in a provoking, questioning kind of way; and then, a quite different and absolutely kindly expression flitting over her tell-tale face, she added, "The boy has a good heart inside his nonsense—of that I am quite sure."

The two young figures crossed the lawn outside as she said the words, and a smile broke in her eyes as she looked at them.

"Then you mean to accept him?" said Sir Richard in a dull voice.

"Well, is there any real and valid reason that I should not?" asked she, still looking out of window.

He was silent.

"Ah! I see you think there is," she said, turning round to him

again. "You say your objection is not to my profession? Then it must be to my age."

He made an impatient movement, and she took up a little hand-mirror that lay on the table.

"I really did see a gray hair this morning," she sighed. "Ah, yes—there it is! Would you like to see it?"

"I believe we are speaking seriously, Miss Reynolds," said he. She laid down the mirror at once.

"Yes," she said, "you are quite right. We will be serious. But now, seriously, Sir Richard, considering all you know about Arthur Curzon, don't you think it would be a very good thing for him to marry young?"

"It depends on whom he marries," he replied.

A shade crossed her fair brow, but she still smiled as she said, "Ah, you mean it must not be *me*."

He lifted his keen black eyes and looked straight into hers.

"No, not you, Miss Reynolds," he said.

She turned a little pale.

"Ah! then you must tell me why, Sir Richard," she said.

But she still spoke half lightly; she *would* not be angry, she *would* not even seem to be too serious.

"If you insist, of course I must," he said.

"I do insist," she replied.

He took his eyes from her face; his lips were set close, and there was two deep lines on his brow.

"You force me to be brutal," he resumed. "Is there no other way of inducing you to give up the boy?"

"I must know your reason for expecting me to give him up," was her answer.

"His mother is the oldest friend I have," murmured he, as though arguing with himself. "I have known the boy since he was a little lad, and he has no father. How can I let him marry one whom he cannot—ought not to—respect?"

A tremor as of some vague shadow ran over her face, but she neither moved nor spoke.

"You little guess what it costs me to speak!" he added, forcing himself to look at her again—"what it cost me five years ago to believe what I had to believe!"

"To believe what you had to believe?" repeated she, emphasizing each word, and piercing him with her gaze so that he had to lower his eyes.

"Oh, do not force me to say more!" pleaded he.

But she rose now and advanced toward him.

"But I *must* force you," insisted she quietly. "What *had* you to believe?"

She stood up in front of him, looking at him steadily; and again he could not bear it, and turned away his eyes—he who had borne the fret and flash of the enemy's fire many and many a time with a steady gaze.

"Why did you receive Percy St. Vincent every day and at any hour of the day all those weeks?" said he at last, huskily answering her question with another. "And why did you not tell me of it yourself? Why did you leave me to find it out from others?"

She dropped her hands, which she had held clasped in front of her, as though to enforce her self-command. A half-smile curled her lips, but it was not sweet now, it was rather bitter and rather sad.

"Others!" she echoed. "Who where the 'others'?"

"What does it matter who they were?" muttered he. "Were they right or wrong? Was it true?"

He spoke eagerly, feverishly, almost supplicatingly.

She turned her back on him and went and sat down again by the table.

"Yes," she said, quietly—"quite true."

There was a long pause.

"I should like to know," she said at last, still in a hard, constrained voice, "why you should suppose it was not true? Why should I not receive Mr. St. Vincent at any time that I chose? To whom was I obliged to give an account of my actions? There is some riddle beneath your question, and I am not clever at guessing riddles."

"They say——" he began awkwardly, after a minute. But she interrupted him, with sudden change of mood—vehemently.

"Who say?" she cried. "Loafers at stage-doors! Insignificant actors, jealous of a woman's success! And my word against theirs would not be enough! Ah, no, you needn't trouble to deny it! I know it would not be enough. And it is idle for me to give it. And yet, I must tell you, Sir Richard, that to any question that you might consider yourself entitled to ask me, I should have no answer to give you but my word—my simple word."

She spoke with scorn—quick, vibrating scorn, the scorn of a sensitive creature wounded to the core. But he said nothing,

and his face was very pale, and the sight of it touched that sensitiveness in her afresh.

"Forgive me," she said, more gently. "I know you have no acquaintances among people of that sort. I am angry and I speak at random. But tell me what *they* say of me. What they say of me at your club, for instance—what some man whose name I am too honorable to disclose says of the woman who sent him about his business. Come, come, tell me what they say of me. I am longing to hear!"

"They say he used to visit you every day," murmured Sir Richard, with lowered gaze.

"Poor Percy! they can't even leave him alone in his grave," smiled she, sadly. "Or is it me whom they won't leave alone? Well, he did come every day—sometimes oftener—and if I arranged that it should be at a time when he was not likely to meet any one, it was because he had a reason—that had absolutely nothing to do either with you or me or any of our *friends*—for not wishing it to be known that he came here."

She stopped suddenly, still looking at him; her face was a little cruel.

"But he didn't come to see me," she said, after a long pause; "he came to see his child."

"His child!" echoed Sir Richard, startled.

"Yes," she repeated. "When he came late at night and early in the morning it was to hear the doctor's report of her when she had the scarlet fever. When he spent a whole long night here, it was beside her bed, watching with me, because we both of us feared she would not see the dawn. Poor fellow! he doted on her. She was all he had in the world. His wife was dead."

"His wife!" echoed he again. "Dead!"

"Yes. He had married—beneath him," she said, fixing her eyes on him, and with the slightest possible pause before the last two words. And she added, with a little curl of the lip, "He had married an actress."

"Don't!" muttered Sir Richard.

"His family had persistently refused to receive her," continued she, without noticing him, "and so he had always refused to see them. The result was that the supplies were stopped, and that he was disinherited. He worked for her for ten years, but he wasn't clever—poor Percy! They never got on. She died. He was heartbroken, and when he knew that he too was doomed, he came and asked me to care for his girl."

"But what claim had he on you?" said Sir Richard.

"This," she answered: "his wife and I belonged to the same profession; she had been my friend."

He lifted his eyes on her, and this time she lowered hers.

"I brought up his child," she went on hurriedly. "She came home from school for good three weeks ago. You saw her just now. Her name is really Mary St. Vincent, but I call her May Reynolds. He wished it. He was obstinate, and he never forgave his people."

There was a long pause. The furrow above Sir Richard's nose grew deeper than ever.

"Margaret, can you ever forgive me?" murmured he, at last.

"Certainly I can. Why not?" answered she, still with her studiously careless manner. "I daresay it was natural you should think as you did. Appearances were against me. As you said just now, Percy St. Vincent had no claim on me, and so folk had to invent one! They can't believe what they don't understand, so they very often *know* what they have neither seen nor heard."

"I deserve your scorn," murmured he.

"So you see, Sir Richard," she continued, "I am not at all likely to marry a man of good family. I've had my lesson."

"You are cruel," he said. "But it is just."

"Cruel!" laughed she. "Good gracious! what does the man want? Why, I thought you came here to implore me not to marry Arthur Curzon?"

"Arthur Curzon!" cried he. "'Pon my soul, I had clean forgotten the boy."

"I'm afraid you're a very untrustworthy ambassador, Sir Richard," said the lady, gravely. "However, you may go back to your sovereign, and say that she need have no alarm—the prince of the blood is safe; at least he is safe so far as *I* am concerned. I shall not marry him; and indeed, to tell you the honest truth, I'm not even sure that he wants to marry me. Three weeks ago I think he was in some little danger. But I set him to do my portrait, and it has turned out so badly that I think it has knocked the conceit out of him! And then little May came home and—well, with one thing and another, I think I may call him a complete cure."

"A complete cure," echoed Sir Richard, musing. "I wonder if one knows when one is a complete cure?"

"So you had better hasten back with the good news," she went on, brusquely, disregarding his remark. "Don't keep the poor lady in suspense."

But he did not move; he kept his eyes fastened on her face, and did not even speak.

She took up her work again, and as she did so, she added, lightly, "Perhaps you'll tell her that I'm not so bad after all, and that some women might have taken advantage of his bit of boyish romanticism. Of course, I knew it was only pretty nonsense from beginning to end, and that it lay with me to cure him; but if it had not been for my determination not to marry, I might not have taken the trouble to cure him."

"Exactly," murmured he absently. And after a pause he added brusquely, "Is that determination of yours a recent one?"

"What?—my determination not to marry?" she asked carelessly. "Well, let me see! Recent!" she repeated, with an air of deep consideration: "I can't quite say. About five years ago——"

"Five years ago?" interrupted he.

"I had so many offers of marriage," continued she, quietly, "that I really had to consider the subject carefully."

"So many offers of marriage?" repeated he.

"Yes," she said with a smile, glancing at him. Then suddenly her face became sweet and serious, and she added softly, "But there! It was an offer that I never actually had that I *really* took into consideration. Wasn't that unfeminine of me? Don't tell Mrs. Curzon *that* when you try to make the best of me to her!"

He came and stood over her, watching her trying to sort the silks in her lap.

"Will you tell me from whom that unspoken offer was, that you once took into consideration, Margaret?" asked he.

"Oh, no! Why should I mortify myself to please you?" said she.

"Only because there was an offer that was never actually spoken five years ago, in which I am deeply interested," said he. "But you are right. Why should you answer what was never asked? Margaret, is it too late to ask it now?"

She was silent. Her hands no longer toyed with the silks, but she did not look at him.

"It is only what I deserve," he sighed, turning away.

"You will admit," she said, "that it *was* mortifying to be so

swiftly and cruelly judged by—by such an old and valued friend.”

He turned back quickly.

“Margaret!” he cried.

“Circumstances were against me, I allow,” she continued, with the same assumption of haughtiness, waving him aside; “yet I assure you it would never have entered into my head to imagine you could misunderstand me, even if I had guessed that you knew my secret.”

“Ah! if you had been a little less proud, if you had chosen to justify yourself by the slightest word that day——” he began.

“Justify myself!” cried she. “How little you know a woman if you suppose she would justify herself when she suspects she may be making a mistake, and yet guesses that some one else thinks she is more in the wrong than she is! Of *course* I was too proud!”

“I didn’t think of that,” murmured Sir Richard, humbled, penitent, and puzzled.

“And remember,” she continued, regally wielding the whip snatched from the enemy, “you never asked for an explanation. If you were too delicate to do so, well, all I can say is, you made a huge blunder. Naturally, I only thought you had been having advice from your friends, and were acting on it. To tell you the truth, I pitied you.”

“Margaret! How could you so misjudge me?” he remonstrated.

And at that she laughed—softly, sweetly, but right merrily: a laugh that welled up from the very depths of a generous and tender heart: a laugh that melted the last shred of ice—that healed the last sore of wounded pride.

“Come, I like that!” she said. “Pray, who needs forgiveness most?”

“I do,” he answered readily - and yet, strange to say, humbly no longer. “I treated you infamously——”

“I think so!” she put in.

“But you are going to forgive me!”

He did not ask it—he declared it; and as he declared it he took her hand.

“You are victorious,” he added; “you always have been, you always will be; but every great victor——”

“Has a master?” she asked, looking up in his face with her most provoking smile.

"No," he answered seriously—"has a merciful heart."

He drew the hand a little towards him, and stooping over it with old-fashioned courtliness, kissed it gravely.

"Here come the young ones," she cried, turning away to hide the flush that crept unbidden to her cheek; "it's their turn now. You musn't go back with any deceptive news to the lady mother, although you can safely promise that *I* shall never marry her son!"

He turned half dreamily towards the window, where, in the lingering spring daylight, Arthur Curzon stood on the lawn saying a last word to the slender girl with the drooping brown head.

"You don't mean to say——?" he began.

"I don't mean to say anything," she replied. "Only, if the worst should come to the worst, remember she's a St. Vincent after all!"

"You always would have the last word," sighed he, with a twinkle in his eye. "And you shall have it—always—provided that to-day it is 'yes'?"

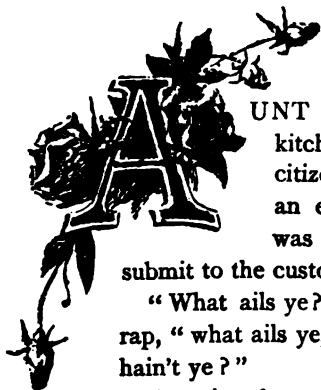
The window opened and the fragrance of the lilac came wafted into the room.

"Come again to-morrow," said she, with the same provoking smile. And she crossed the room to take the garlands of *laburnum* with which the young girl entered, laden.



UNCLE THAN'L'S OBITUARY *

BY EDITH SESSIONS TUPPER



UNT ALCINY BUTTON sat before the kitchen stove lighting her pipe. By the citizens of Durkey Points she was counted an expert in this line, but to-day her pipe was refractory and appeared unwilling to submit to the customary operation.

"What ails ye?" asked Aunt Alciny, giving it a smart rap, "what ails ye, I'd like to know? Got the margrums, hain't ye?"

A voice from the bedroom answered: "I'm as fid-getty as a cat. I'm scairt of that air rheumatiz comin' back, and I've 'bout concluded to run up to Sophi' Sweezey's and git her started on that air obituary. Ye can't never tell what's goin' to happen. In the midst of life, Scriptur' saith——"

"O, pshaw!" said Aunt Alciny, reaching for a fresh coal. "I wa'n't talkin' to you, Than'l."

"Wal, who in thunder be ye a-talkin' to?" demanded the voice from the bedroom.

"My pipe," drawled the old lady. "I wouldn't swear if I wuz you. Nice thing, ain't it, for a man to fall a cussin' when he's talkin' 'bout death."

"O!" said Uncle Than'l, as he came through the doorway, "I couldn't make out who ye wuz talkin' to. I wa'n't exactly swearin', mar. Ye can't really call 'thunder' profane."

"Tain't sacred, nuther," said Aunt Alciny, grimly, pulling away at her pipe. Then she continued: "So ye're goin' to git that obituary up right off, be ye?"

"Wal, yes, mar," replied Uncle Than'l, sitting down beside her. "Ye see, I want Sophi' to do it while she's here, for she's a masterhand on writin', and hefty on po'try an' sich. I spoke to her," rather hesitatingly, "other night to pra'r-meetin', an' she said she'd fix up one in first-rate style."

Aunt Alciny smoked in silence, while her husband watched

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her anxiously. She was a little, wrinkled old woman with a sharp, shrewd, mocking face. Her gray hair was done up in a wee knot at the back of her head. As she sat there she looked so small, so fragile, so uncanny, one might have expected her to disappear in the wreaths of smoke circling up toward the white-washed ceiling, but little as she was, all the neighbors agreed that she had plenty of "grit" and ruled her husband with a rod of iron.

Her silence was inauspicious. Uncle Than'l felt that she disapproved of the obituary. He resolved, however, to battle manfully for his inalienable rights.

"What do you think, mar?" he asked, in as careless a manner as he could assume under the circumstances.

"Hev yer ben measured for your coffin yit?" suddenly asked his grim little wife.

"Lord! no, mar."

"Nor your shroud?"

"Massy me! Heow ye do talk, mar. Ye've set me all of a shiver."

"Wal, I don't see how ye come to overlook them things. Ef ye're goin' to die, I kalculate ye'll need a coffin an' a shroud more'n ye will an obituary."

"Now look here, mar," cried Uncle Than'l, desperately, "I hain't agoin' to be baulked on that air obituary. I've set my heart on it. Ye've allus had your way and I've harkened to ye, but I'm agoin' to do jest as I please; yes, sir, jest as I goll darn please 'bout my obituary, an' you put that in yer pipe and smoke it." And, squaring his stooping shoulders, Uncle Than'l rose, seized the milking-pail and set out for the barn.

Aunt Alciny was so amazed at this sudden outburst of defiance that she dropped her pipe with a crash upon the hearth and stared after her husband's retreating form.

"Wal, may I be everlastingly swoggled!" she ejaculated.

From a Durkey Points standard this was a fearful curse for a church member, but Aunt Alciny felt the exigencies of the occasion would justify the anathema. "Than'l is a bigger fool than I took him to be, an' I ain't never sot no great store by his wits, nuther. He's gone clean daft over the idee of an obituary, and Sophi' is jest sickin' him on so's to have a chance to splurge an' show off them big words of her'n. I'll have to stand it I s'pose, unless I kin shame him off the notion."

But Uncle Than'l was not to be shamed off the notion of hav-

ing an ornate obituary prepared betimes in which his virtues as a citizen, a husband and a church member should be duly set forth. It was one of those harmless bits of vanity which are frequently found in remote rural districts. Life is so peaceful and monotonous that the simple ideas and thoughts of the humble inhabitants continually revolve about themselves. The busy, noisy outside world and its affairs are of very little consequence to them.

In Uncle Than'l's thirst for an obituary, he was aided and abetted by one Sophia Sweezey, who was, as Aunt Alciny had shrewdly said, desirous of making a rhetorical "splurge."

Sophia was better educated than most of her neighbors. She had been married three times, and on that account was regarded with considerable awe by her townsfolk, as one having authority and vast experience. She loved to talk, pray and write.

"She's got the gift of gab," said Miss Priscilla Dean, who, it was suspected, cherished envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness toward Sophia for the sake of those three defunct husbands, "an' thar hain't no one that can address the throne of grace an' give the Lord more news in fifteen minutes than Sophi' Sweezey kin."

This woman of parts set speedily to work on Uncle Than'l's obituary. The good man eagerly supplied the necessary data and information, and awaited the result with ill-concealed anxiety. One evening as he sat enjoying his pipe after the chores were finished, he suspended puffing for a moment to murmur: "I do wonder, mar, how Sophi' Sweezey is a-gettin' on with that air obituary of mine."

As a rule Aunt Alciny contented herself with an ejaculation—something between a sniff and a snort—which was supposed to convey contempt. One night, however, after carefully knocking the ashes from her pipe upon the hearth, she coolly remarked:

"Of all the vainglorious animals, Than'l, I ever see in my life, you are the worst. Ye'd better beware. Satan is a-temptin' on yer—a tryin' on ye. Ye're a gittin' puffed up with a sense of importance. Ye're a gittin' to feel big—and I blame it all on that obituary. I wish the plagued thing had never entered your head. But I wash my hands of it. Ef any judgment overtakes ye, don't expect no sympathy from me, for it'll be along of that obituary you an' Sophi' Sweezey are a-cookin' up betwixt ye."

Thus ended Aunt Alciny's expostulations. From this hour she ceased to be a prophet and became instead, a critic.

For the very next day Sophia brought home the obituary. She intended to remain to tea and read it aloud to the old couple, but as this suggestion met with no encouragement from Aunt Alciny, she framed an excuse for a sudden departure and retired, rather abashed, from the presence of the old woman, whose face wore a more sardonic smile than usual.

But Uncle Than'l could scarcely wait until the evening chores were finished, so desirous was he to see his virtues presented in ink. With nervous hands he unfolded the manuscript, tied up, with lugubrious propriety, in narrow black ribbons, and clearing his throat with a resonant "hem," began to read aloud. Meanwhile Aunt Alciny smoked.

"'Another ripe sheaf has been garnered,'" so ran the obituary, "'another shock of corn has been gleaned.'"

"I s'pose that's you," dryly interrupted Aunt Alciny, "you're the shock of corn and ripe sheaf. Humph! you look more like one of them dried bulrushes Priscilla Dean's got stood up in the corner of her parlor. Wal, go on."

"'We are again called upon to mourn the untimely loss of a prominent citizen,'" Uncle Than'l smacked his lips now and read with the greatest satisfaction, "'a devoted and faithful father and husband and an upright pillar of the church.'"

"Humph!" from Aunt Alciny's corner, "Ain't all pillars upright, I'd like to know?"

"But, mar," suggested Uncle Than'l timidly, "hain't ther some pillars more upright than others."

"Mebbe, mebbe," replied the old woman; "go on, let's hear the rest on't."

"'Nathaniel Button, one of the oldest of Durkey Point's settlers, deacon of the Baptist church and town pathmaster, entered into rest last——'" here a blank was left for the date of Uncle Than'l's demise.

"Wal, why don't she git to work?" demanded Aunt Alciny, "here you've been gleaned and garnered an' entered into rest. There's enough of that I should think. Why don't she tell where ye was born, an'," bridling a little, "who ye married, an' something about your religious experience. Pshaw! I could git up a better obituary than that myself without half tryin'."

"Hold on, mar; I'm comin' to that," replied Uncle Than'l,

"don't be in such an all-fired hustle. An obituary is a thing ye've got to go kinder slow with. It's more fittin'."

"Nathaniel was born in Brattleborough, Vermont, in 1817," he read on.

"Wa'n't nuthin' of the kind," answered Aunt Alciny, "'twas 1815. Tryin' to make yerself out younger 'n ye be, I see."

"That's so," rejoined her husband nervously. "I don't see how I come to make such a mistake."

"At the tender age of nine, deceased removed with his parents," continued the "deceased," to New York state, and after various changes settled in Durkey Points, then a howling wilderness."

"Howling!" ejaculated Aunt Alciny; "I'd like to know! What howled?"

"Wildcats, mar," suggested Uncle Than'l, nervously.

"Wildcats don't howl," said his wife contemptuously; "they yowl."

"Wall—yowl," repeated Uncle Than'l rather impatiently. "I don't know as there's any great difference."

"Than'l," said Aunt Alciny, waving her pipe emphatically, "have it right. Ef ye're bound to have an obituary, don't for massy's sakes have any howling wild cats in it fer folks to laugh at."

"When deceased was twenty he wooed and wed Alciny Griggs'——"

"Wooed!" said Aunt Alciny with infinite scorn. "Wooed! Where'd she get such a silly word? Sparked is good enough fer folks like us."

"I'll change it, mar, ef ye'd like it better," said Uncle Than'l, eager to propitiate his critic.

"Wall, I should think ye'd better. Wooed!" Aunt Alciny gave vent to one of her most disdainful snorts.

Uncle Than'l read on to the close of his life and followed with great relish the details of his taking off. He hesitated over "the stroke" which killed him.

"It might be a stroke," he said, "an' then again it might be rheumatiz or consumption, mar, or fits."

"'Twon't never be no consumption, Than'l, with them lungs of your'n," stated his wife; "more likely a stroke."

"Wall, that can be fixed up afterwards," rejoined Uncle Than'l; "an' now, mar," he added, after going over the description of his funeral and the list of his pall bearers, an item he

had quite insisted upon, although Sophia had suggested that he might possibly outlive them all, "now, mar, I call that a mighty good obituary, don't you?"

"No, I don't," said Aunt Alciny, tartly. "I shouldn't have said nuthin' 'bout your donations to the church—looks like braggin' too much—an' there wa'n't no need of bringin' in that lawsuit agin Tom Beebe—an'——"

"Now see here, mar," said the "deceased," suddenly rising and speaking with unwonted firmness, "whose obituary is this? When you have your'n composed, you can have what you want; but——"

"Me?" echoed Aunt Alciny, shrilly. "I hain't such a plagued fool as to have no obituaries wrote. No, sir; one idiot's enough for the family." With this parting shot she returned to her pipe.

The obituary was carefully folded and laid away with Uncle Than'l's mortgages and notes in the old-fashioned secretary. But it was often stealthily brought forth and pored over by its subject, who fancied that his wife did not notice the act. But Aunt Alciny's eyes were sharp and nothing escaped her. Moreover, she remarked that her husband was changed since the obituary was written. He had assumed an air of importance, strangely at variance with his former humble mien. He paid more attention to his dress, brushed his thin hair oftener, and took to wearing his best Sunday coat on week-days. He expended money—he who had always been so frugal, even penurious. Instead of smoking at home he flaunted his pipe along the highway. On several occasions he swore alarmingly and conducted himself in general like a very depraved and gay old boy, instead of an estimable citizen and an upright pillar of the church.

"It's a judgment," murmured Aunt Alciny, "come on account of his vainglory. He's got so sot up since that air obituary was writ, there hain't no livin' with him. He's growin' so dressy an' sassy I dunno what on earth I'm goin' to do."

The climax of Uncle Than'l's riotous living came when he saw Miss Priscilla Dean home from prayer-meeting one Thursday evening. Durkey Points was horrified at this lapse from social standards and tongues wagged fiercely on the matter, which became at length so great a stench in the nostrils of the neighborhood, it was deemed necessary that a committee from the church should call upon Uncle Than'l and show him the error of his ways. So it came about that Deacon Alvin Hoosier

and brethren Ezra Applebee and Amri Goodrich called on Uncle Than'l one dreary December afternoon, wearing their best clothes and expressions of great melancholy.

Uncle Than'l received them cordially and ushered them into the sitting-room where Aunt Alciny sat, silent and stern, for she at once suspected the nature of their visit. But Uncle Than'l was perfectly at ease and chattered away about the crops and the church until Deacon Hoosier said, with a degree of mournfulness befitting so solemn an occasion: "Brother Button, we hain't come to talk about no crops nor yet the church, but about your own conduct."

"My—my conduct," faltered Uncle Than'l.

"Yes, we are grieved with ye," returned the deacon, while something like a groan escaped Brother Amri.

"I dunno's I've done nuthin' I'm ashamed of," announced Uncle Than'l, rather testily. "What air your charges?"

"We don't bring no charges *yit*," said the deacon, with considerable emphasis on the last word, "we only want to reason with ye—to open yer eyes to yer transgressions."

"If ye can do that," stated Aunt Alciny from her corner, "ye can do more'n I can."

"Brother Button," pursued the deacon, "we air grieved at the light state into which ye've fallen of late. Ye don't walk circumspectly as ye oughter. Ye hang round the corners tellin' stories an' smokin'! Ye air sot up in yer manner, an' it don't look proper for a married man and a perfesser to walk hum with no old maids. Folks air a-talkin' about yer and ye air a-castin' reproach on Zion, and the church'll have to do somethin' if ye don't quit it. That air's our grievance, an' if you'll jine us we'll pray," and pray he did, loudly and fervently, that the eyes of Uncle Than'l might be opened to the position in which he stood.

When his visitors departed Uncle Than'l sat silent before the fire, occasionally casting shamefaced glances toward his grim little wife. At length he spoke: "I hope ye didn't think nuthin' of my walkin' hum with Priscilly, mar, did ye? 'Twa'n't exactly my fault. 'Twas a rainin' an' she didn't have no parasol, so I jest offered to let her walk along under my umbrell."

"There wouldn't have been no harm in it as I know on," said Aunt Alciny, "if Priscilly had knowed enough to keep her mouth shut. But blab! why, there hain't man, woman nor child in Durkey Points that she hain't told on't. Tickled to death to have a man walk with her. Fust time, I s'pose."

"She's a fool—a blamed old fool," stated Uncle Than'l.

"There hain't nothin' like an old fool, ye know," dryly suggested his wife. "She's vain, ye see. Jest shows where vanity 'll lead ye. An' that's what ails ye, Than'l. Ye've grown orful proud lately. Why, our old peacock out in the yard there hain't a mite vainer 'n you be lately. Ye strut 'round as if ye owned the town, wear yer best clothes every day, and keep lookin' in the glass the hull time."

"Wall, I don't know what's the matter with me," sighed Uncle Than'l, "I hain't felt jest right lately. It's kinder seemed as if I wasn't myself but some other feller."

"Wall, I know, if you don't," said Aunt Alciny; "it's that air obituary of your'n."

"Pshaw, mar!" said Uncle Than'l, rising impatiently, "ye're bound to blame everything on my obituary."

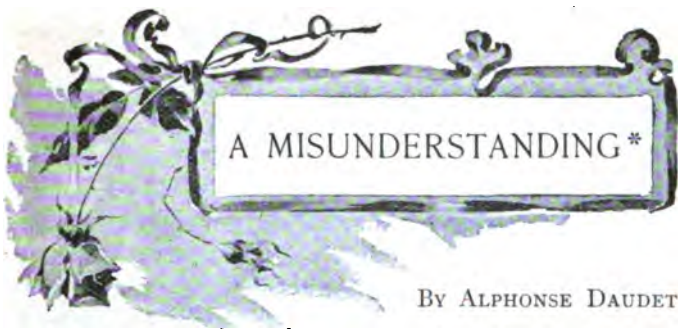
"Than'l Button," said his wife solemnly, "ye hain't never ben the same crittur since that air obituary, a praisin' an' a flatterin' ye up, was brought into this house. Ye couldn't stand all them fine things that wuz said about ye. Ye got important, thought everybody wuz lookin' at ye an' admirin' ye, an', let me tell ye, Than'l, when a man gits to that place he generally makes a fool of himself in some way."

Uncle Than'l made no reply, but, taking his hat, stole softly out to bring in the wood and kindlings.

In the middle of the night Aunt Alciny suddenly awakened. Missing her partner, she rose on one arm and looked through the door into the kitchen where a dim light showed her a strange sight. Uncle Than'l sat by the kitchen stove, holding a candle close to his eyes, by whose light he was poring over the obituary. Quite out of all patience, his wife was on the point of speaking to him, when, with a deep sigh, he carefully folded the obituary, opened the stove, thrust it in, set it on fire from the candle and watched it slowly perish.

Then, with the dejected mien of one who had parted with his dearest possession, Uncle Than'l softly tiptoed back to bed.

Aunt Alciny? She smothered a laugh in the bed clothes and had the grace to pretend to be sound asleep.



BY ALPHONSE DAUDET

THE WIFE'S VERSION

WHAT is the matter with him? Why is he angry with me? I can not understand it. And I have done everything in my power to make him happy, everything. Of course, I won't say I wouldn't have preferred to marry an attorney or a solicitor, or some one with a nice, steady, respectable profession, but such as he was, I really liked him. I thought he was a little eccentric at times, to be sure, but very nice and well-bred; then, too, he had some little money and I hoped that when we were once married, he wouldn't let his poetry keep him from getting some good position or other, and then we could get along very nicely.

He used to find me quite to his taste, too, then. When he came out to the country, to see me at Auntie's, he couldn't find words enough to express his admiration for the way we kept our little house, and, indeed, it was as tidy and neat as a convent. "How amusing!" he used to say. He would laugh, too, and call me by all sorts of names he got out of the poems and novels he was always reading. It used to shock me a little, I admit; I would rather he had been a little more in earnest; but it was only when we were married, and settled down in Paris, that I really saw the difference in our dispositions.

I had planned such a pretty little home, nicely kept, and light and clean; and he immediately began to fill all the rooms with queer old tapestries—oh, so old and faded—and with the most extraordinary furniture, really useless and quite out of style, and absolutely spoiled with dust. It was just the same with everything. If you will believe me, he made me store away into the

* Translated from the French, for Short Stories, by Miss Favard.—Copyrighted.

attic such a pretty Empire clock that my aunt left me, and some beautifully-framed pictures that my friends at boarding-school gave me. He said they were all "hideous." I'm sure I can't imagine why, for his study is filled with smoky old canvases and statuettes that I am ashamed to look at, and ugly old bric-à-brac that is really good for nothing; old candlesticks covered with verdigris, and broken cups that don't match, and vases that won't hold water. Right next to my handsome new piano, too, he set up an ugly little one, with the varnish all scaling off, and half the keys missing, and so worn out, that you can hardly hear it. Really, I began to think to myself, "Why, dear me, an artist certainly must be a little crazy. He doesn't care for anything but such useless things; he seems to despise everything useful."

But it was a great deal worse when I met his friends and saw the society he moved in: people with long hair and long, ill-kept beards, and so badly dressed too. They used to smoke right before me, without even a by your leave, and it made me ill to hear them talk. Their ideas were all so contrary to mine, all high-sounding talk, you know; nothing simple, nothing natural. And such manners! You might ask them to dinner twenty times in succession and they would never call or pay you the slightest attention, or even send you a card or a bon-bon at New Year's—nothing.

Some of the men were married and brought their wives with them—and you ought to have seen the kinds of people they were. Such elegant gowns just for every-day, but not what you or I would ever put on, of course; and so queerly worn, too, without any attention or care. And then their hair, and their long trains, and the brazen manner they had of showing off their accomplishments. Why some of them could sing like actresses and play like professionals, and they chattered away on every subject, just like men. You don't think that is very nice, really now; do you? When women are married, they ought to think of their household cares, and not of other things, oughtn't they? That's what I tried to make my husband see, when he felt so bad at my giving up my music.

"Music," I said, "is all very well, when one is a little girl and has nothing better to do. But really, I should feel perfectly ridiculous, if I had to sit down to the piano every day."

Oh, I know—his great grievance against me is that I have tried to get him out of that queer set whose influence was so bad

for him. He reproaches me to this day for keeping his friends at a distance. Well, I did do it, and I am glad of it. Why, they would have turned his head. Sometimes, after being with them, he would spend the whole night, versifying and walking up and down the room, talking to himself. As if he wasn't queer and eccentric enough without any one's making him any worse.

Oh, the whims and fancies of that man's I've had to put up with! Sometimes he would burst into my room, suddenly in the morning, with a "Quick! put on your hat; we're going to the woods to-day." And I had to leave everything, my sewing and my housework, and spend a lot of money in cabs and railway fares, when I knew very well we ought to be saving and economical. For you know fifteen thousand francs a year doesn't go very far when you're living in Paris, and want to do something for your children.

At first he used to laugh about it, and tried to make me laugh, but when he saw that it was my intention to live very quietly and properly, he became angry at my simplicity and my domestic tastes. Is it my fault if I hate theatres and concerts and those artists' parties he was always wanting to drag me to, where he would have been sure to meet his former friends, a parcel of crack-brained Bohemians and spendthrifts?

I thought at one time he was coming to his senses. I had succeeded in making him leave his own set, and had gathered about us a number of nice, sensible, respectable people, who might have been able to do something for him—but no, indeed. It bored him to death. He was bored to death from morning till night. You should have seen his face, and what a temper he was in at my little "at homes," though I am sure I always had whist and tea and everything necessary. And when we were alone, it was just the same thing over again.

And I was so thoughtful and attentive too. I would say, "Read me what you're writing now, won't you?" and he would recite long strings of poetry, verse after verse. I didn't understand a word of it, but I pretended to be very much interested in it, and used to put in a word now and then, which somehow or other always seemed to irritate him.

But in a whole year, with all his rhyming, he got out only one book, and that didn't sell. I said to him, "Now, don't you see?" just by way of reasoning with him, to lead him to something better, something more remunerative, and he flew into the most violent passion; and ever since he has been so blue that it

makes me quite miserable. My friends do all they can for me. "You see, my dear, he doesn't know what to do with himself. Every man with so much time on his hands has these fits of temper. If he only had some little occupation now, he would not be so wretched."

So I started out, and all my friends with me, to try to obtain a position for him. I moved heaven and earth. I can't tell you how many calls I made on the wife of this secretary and of that. I even went to members of the Cabinet, but, of course, without letting him know. I was saving it up as a surprise for him. I kept saying to myself, "Now, we'll see if he won't be glad, this time."

At last the day came when I received his appointment in a great official envelope with five seals. I took it to his study, wild with delight. For was not our future assured now, and comfort, and the peace that work brings, and its self-content?

Do you know what he did?

He said he would never forgive me in his whole life, and he tore the letter into a thousand pieces, and rushed out, slamming the door.

Oh these literary people with their poor turned heads, who take life the wrong way!

What is to become of a person with a man like that? I wanted to talk it over with him—to reason with him—but no. I ought to have known. My friends all told me he was crazy.

And what good would talking do? We don't speak the same language. He wouldn't understand me, anymore than I understand him.

And now here we are. I know he must hate me. I feel it in his eyes, and still I like him.

Really it is very hard.

THE HUSBAND'S VERSION



I HAD thought of everything, and taken every precaution. I did not want to marry a *Parisienne* because I was afraid of Parisian ladies. I did not want a wealthy wife, with her riches bringing after them all the importunate demands of wealth. I dreaded family connections too, that network of far-reaching, commonplace affections, which imprison and belittle one, and finally suffocate him.

My wife was, indeed, all that I had dreamed of. I used to think, "She will owe everything to me and what a pleasure it will be to lead that artless mind to the love of the Beautiful, to let her pure soul enter into all my enthusiasms and hopes,—to breathe life into that statue."

For, indeed, she was very like a statue, with her great, calm, serious eyes, her regular Grecian profile and her well-defined features, which would have been almost severe, if they had not been softened by the delicacy which all youthful faces owe to their rose-tinted bloom and the shadow of rippling hair. She had, too, a slight provincial accent, which was my delight, and which I used to listen to with closed eyes, as to a remembrance of a happy childhood, the echo of a tranquil life in a hidden corner far away. And to think that now that accent has become unbearable to me!

But in those days I was hopeful. I loved her. I was happy, and ready and willing to become even more so. I was so full of ardor for my work that, immediately after my marriage, I began a new poem, and in the evenings I used to read to her what I had written during the day. At first, she would say, "that is very nice," and I was grateful to her for even these childish words of approbation, hoping that some day she would understand what meant life itself to me.

Poor thing! How I must have bored her! After reading my verses to her, I used to explain them, seeking in her beautiful wide-opened eyes a responsive gleam, and fancying always that I had found it there. I used to make her give me her opinion, tell me what she thought best, and I would glide over the inanities of her replies, remembering only the few, which, by chance, happened to be good. I wanted so much to make her my real wife, the wife of an *artiste*: but no. She did not understand. In vain did I read to her from the greatest poets, from the most beautiful, and the most tender; the golden rhymes of their love-verses fell before her with the weary dullness and chill of rain. Once, I remember, I was reading the "October Night," and she interrupted me to ask for something "deeper." I tried to explain to her that there is nothing in the world deeper than poetry,—that it is the very essence of life and hovers over it like a vibrant light in which words and thoughts rise and are transfigured. Oh, the disdainful smile of those pretty lips, and the condescension in her eyes! You would have thought she was listening to a madman, or to a child.

What did I not say? What floods of eloquence did I not pour forth? But all to no purpose. I was forever bringing up short against what she called "good, sound common sense," the never-failing cant of the narrow-minded and of those "whose hearts are dry as summer dust."

Nor was it poetry alone that bored her. Before we were married, I had thought she cared for music. She seemed to understand what she played, drilled, as it was, into her by her teacher. But immediately after our marriage she closed the piano and bade good-by to music. Is there anything sadder than the young wife's giving up all that made her young girlhood attractive? When once her lines are recited and her rôle ended the actress doffs her costume. This surface of little accomplishments, of pretty smiles, of passing elegance is only in view of matrimony. The change with her was instantaneous. I thought at first that she would get, in spite of herself, in this wonderful Paris, where the eyes and mind are refined, as it were, unconsciously, the taste which I could not impart to her and a comprehension of art and of the beautiful. But what is to be done with a woman who never opens a book, to whom everything is distasteful, and who *will* not understand?

I soon saw that I must resign myself to my fate, that she was not my *wife*, but only an active, economical—oh! a very economical—housekeeper—woman, as Proud'hon depicts her, and nothing more. I would have borne it, so many are situated as I am, but that modest rôle was not sufficient.

Little by little, quietly and in an underhand way, she succeeded in estranging all my friends. We never stood upon ceremony before her, but continued to talk as we used to do in the past, and she was never able to fathom the irony or the playful fancy of our artistic exaggerations and our mad axioms and paradoxes. It only irritated and confused her. She would listen, as she sat in a little corner of the drawing-room, without saying a word, but mentally resolving on the dismissal, each in his turn, of all those shocking men. In spite of an apparent welcome, there was making itself felt within my walls that chill little draught which is so sure a sign that the door is ajar and that it will be soon time to go.

When once my friends were driven away she replaced them by her own. I was hemmed in on all sides by Philistines, odious people, who knew absolutely nothing of art, and who looked down upon poetry as something which "doesn't pay." They

used to talk in my presence of the "fashionable" writers of the day—people who turned out novels and plays by the score, and purposely say in a casual manner, "So-and-so makes a great deal of money."

That was all the wretches thought of, and I saw, to my sorrow, that my wife thought as they did. In that sordid atmosphere her provincial habits, her mean and petty views of life, narrowed down into an incredible greed. It seemed to me that with an income of fifteen thousand francs one might have lived without fear of the morrow, but she did not think so. She was always complaining, talking of economizing and retrenching, and suggesting profitable investments. Little by little, immersed as I was in this flood of distasteful detail, I felt all love and taste for my work desert me.

Sometimes she would come to my writing-table and look over—Oh, with such disdain!—my last few verses. "Is that all?" she would say, counting over all the hours wasted on those insignificant little lines. Ah, if I had listened to her, this proud title of poet, which I struggled so many years to win, would now be dragged in the mire of mere money-making scribbling. And when I think that it was to this woman I opened up my heart and poured forth all my aspirations; when I think that this aversion she manifests, because forsooth, I do not "make money," dates from the very beginning of our married life, I blush for myself and for her.

"He doesn't make money." That explains it all, her reproachful look, her love for whatever "pays," however little it may be—even to that last step of hers—her trying to obtain some kind of a government position for me.

But there I drew the lines most decidedly. I have nothing left but a firm will, which will give way to neither force nor pleading. She may talk to me forever, freeze me with her iciest glance—my thought is my own, and will forever be beyond her grasp!

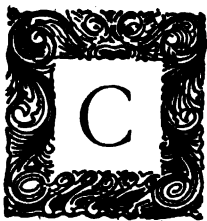
And this is what we have come to!

Think of it! Here we are, married and condemned to live together; leagues apart, and too weary, too discouraged to even try to draw nearer, each to each.

And this for life! Oh, horrible, most horrible!

THE RAINBOW CAMELLIA *

BY FERGUS HUME



COUNTRY solicitors have fewer opportunities than their urban brethren of handling exceptional cases. The friction of metropolitan life develops numerous strange episodes, which are of rarer occurrence in provincial centres. Human nature is no doubt the same in country as in town; but the lack of a concentrated population, by demanding less ingenuity on the part of the criminal, reduces the level of crime. Moreover, bucolic wits are not so keen as those sharpened by the necessities of London life. Agrarian wrong-doers are usually common-place rogues, who sin in a crude fashion unworthy of notice. Crime, which in the capital is a fine art, is in the country commonly the result of a childish outburst of temper. These remarks apply peculiarly to the inhabitants of inland market-towns, and to the rural population of their intervening pasture-lands.

Yet at times a case not easily to be paralleled, even in the metropolis, comes under the notice of a country solicitor. Such a one is that of the Rainbow Camellia, which is, to my mind, unique in the annals of crime. It was simply a case of theft, but sufficiently noticeable for the skillful way in which it was planned and executed. My first intimation of the affair came from my wife, who one morning entered the breakfast-room with a face expressive of consternation.

"Fred," said she, in an awestruck tone, "do you remember Eliza Drupp, the housemaid, who left six months ago?"

"Was that the red-haired minx who smashed our best dinner service, and who carried a bottle of diamond cement in her pocket to mend breakages?"

"Yes; she has been arrested."

"I'm not surprised. Whose dinner service is it this time?"

"Don't jest, Fred. I am very sorry for the poor girl. Cook told me all about it. She is so excited."

* A selection from "The English Illustrated Magazine."

"Who is excited, cook or Eliza?"

"Cook, of course."

"Then the dinner won't be fit to eat. I wish cook would gossip less, and attend more to her stewing and frying. Give me my breakfast, Nell; I must be off early this morning. Well," I added, as my wife poured out the coffee, "and what has Eliza Drupp been stealing?"

"The rainbow camellia."

"What, the whole plant?"

"No, only a bud. She went into the Gardens yesterday and picked it."

"Audacious creature, she'll get six months for that. Old Bendel is on the Bench, and as he is a prominent member of the Horticultural Society, Eliza need expect no mercy."

"I don't know what possessed her to do such a thing," said Nell reflectively; "and the worst of it is, that George Beanfield gave information about the theft."

"Who is George Beanfield, and why shouldn't he give information?"

"Because he kept company with her. It is a piece of spite on his part to punish Eliza for taking up with the greengrocer."

"I congratulate you on your knowledge of kitchen gossip, Nell. But you have not answered my question. Who is George Beanfield?"

"A gardener in the service of the Horticultural Society. I suppose he will be the principal witness against poor Eliza. How can a man be so mean?"

"A man scorned is as dangerous as a woman scorned, my dear. Eliza should not have 'walked out' with the greengrocer. By the way, was George the man who used to hide in the coal-cellar?"

"No, that was a soldier."

"Oh, then he was the Gargantua who devoured all the cold meat."

"Don't talk nonsense, Fred. Go to your office, and if you hear anything of the case, tell me when you come home. I am so sorry for poor Eliza."

This was very charitable on the part of Nell. So far as I could remember Eliza Drupp had been a sore trial, and I had frequently heard my wife express a hope that the Drupp sins would come home to the Drupp sinner. Now that they had come in the most satisfactory manner, she regretted the accom-

plishment of her wishes, and pitied the recreant Eliza. I did not. It was impossible to pity a girl who had cost me over twenty pounds in breakages.

When I reached my office, I received a message from Eliza, requesting me to step round to her cell, and discuss the matter. As fish did not come to my net in sufficient quantities to make me despise even such small fry as Eliza, I accepted the invitation, and speedily found myself in the presence of my former housemaid. She was to be brought before Bendel that very morning, so there was no time to be lost in learning what defense she proposed to make.

To judge of the heinousness of Eliza's offense, it is necessary to state that the Horticultural Society of Foxton is the sole owner of the famous rainbow camellia. The unique plant had been brought from China many years ago by a vagrant Foxtonian, and was the only one in existence on this side of the world. The Foxton Society prided itself on the possession of this rarity, the more so as such possession excited the envy of all rival societies. Of these many had attempted to beg, borrow, buy, or steal slips of the plant in order to raise rainbow camellias on their own account; but hitherto had not secured even a single bud. It was reserved for Eliza to commit that crime.

The blossom was streaked with the seven colors of the rainbow—hence its name—and as a further priceless qualification it emitted a distinct odor. Now as, with this exception, a scented camellia is absolutely unknown, it was only natural that the Foxton horticulturists should set a high value on their ownership. I thought myself that their enthusiasm was exaggerated, as the prosperity of Foxton did not entirely depend on the possession of that striped and scented flower; but then I am not a flower-fancier, and cannot appreciate the passions of horticulturists. Those of Foxton were quite offensive in their pride. If Eliza Drupp had stolen the Crown jewels, the theft would have been a mere venial transgression, but that she should cull a single bud of the rainbow camellia placed her beyond the pale of ordinary sinners.

Eliza was tearful but voluble. She had been born within sound of Bow Bells, and talked with a strong cockney accent, which became more marked with increasing agitation. How this child of the London pavement had drifted to Foxton I do not know, but she had served as housemaid in various houses for the last four years, and was accustomed when out of a situa-

tion, which happened frequently on account of her destructive propensities, to visit her parents at Hackney. Her town graces and brazen good looks—our cook said they were brazen—attracted many admiring swains. The vengeful George was one of these, but Eliza had jilted him in favor of the more opulent greengrocer. Nemesis in the person of the deserted gardener was now punishing her for such perfidy.

"'Ow 'e's treated me shaimful," said the tearful Eliza, "jest 'cause I wouldn't taik 'im 'e shows me up loike this."

"If you play with fire, Eliza, you burn your fingers as a natural consequence. But this is not the point. Have you any defense to this charge?"

"I should soigh so, sir. 'Tain't trew es I stole that measly kemmelliar. Whoy, it was my own."

"Come now, that's nonsense. The Foxton rainbow camellia is the only one of its kind in England."

"'Tain't the only one in the world anyhow, sir," retorted Eliza with some heat. "I hev a rinebow kemmelliar et 'Ackney. If you don't bli've me jest send up to my father an' see."

"Do you mean to say that you possess a plant of the same species?" I asked, rather astonished at this information.

"'Course I do, sir. My brother 'e's a steward 'e is, es goes to Chiner on the Three Star Loine, sir. 'E brought it to me fower years ago from furren parts 'e did."

"And the flower you wore was off your own bush?"

"Yuss. I kim 'ere yesterdaiy from 'Ackney, an' 'e brought it with me jest to see if moine was loike this 'un 'ere."

"Did you wear it when you entered the Gardens?"

"No, sir, I 'ed it in a paiper beg, an' when I was in the green'ouse I takes it hout. When I sawr it wure the saime I pins it in moy dress. Then that bloomin' gonoph collared me. D'ye see, sir?"

"I see, but how is it that a blossom is missing from the tree?"

"I don't no, sir. 'Tworn't me as took it, sir. You jist telergrarf to moy father at 'Ackney 'an afsk 'im to bring down my kemmelliar, sir."

"Yes, I'll do that, but as he cannot be down in time for the case to-day, I'll ask for a remand, so that I may ascertain the truth of your story."

"Thenk 'ee, sir. Em I to staiy 'ere, sir?"

"I hope not. I will be security for your bail myself."

"Thet is 'ensome on yer, sir. An' if yer sees that there George Beanfield, sir, jist tell 'im as 'ow I'll scretch 'is eyes out of 'is 'ed."

There was no necessity for me to deliver this agreeable message. She did so herself when brought before the magistrate. Beanfield seemed to appreciate the situation, and to congratulate himself that Eliza was restrained from violence by two stout policemen. As long as possible he remained modestly in the background, and it was with manifest reluctance that he came forward when called upon to enter the witness-box. The lady in the dock glared at him with a mixture of scorn and rage, and again proclaimed her determination to "scretch 'is eyes out." When ordered to be silent she relapsed into tears and said she was being "put upon." I had heard her make this remark before when gently corrected for breaking three plates in succession.

The court was filled with infuriated members of the Horticultural Society who wished Eliza to be forthwith hanged and quartered. It was commonly reported that my client had not only picked the flower but had also stolen a slip of the plant, which she designed to sell to a rival society. Believing that Eliza thus intended to rob Foxton of the glory of solely possessing the rainbow camellia, the horticulturists thought no punishment too severe for so abandoned a creature. I applied for a remand, which old Bendel (who was a rabid member of the society) was disposed to refuse. I pointed out that, in the interests of justice, the prisoner should be granted sufficient time to communicate with her friends, and prove herself innocent of the charge. Bendel did not believe she had a defense, and said as much, but after considerable argument I managed to obtain an adjournment for three days. In the matter of bail I was unsuccessful, as the magistrate declined to allow Eliza to be at large until the matter had been legally threshed out. He was supported in this decision by his angered *confrères*, who had already judged and condemned the delinquent housemaid. The ultimate outcome of my application was the removal of Eliza to her former captivity.

When instructing the parental Drupp by letter as to the misfortune which had befallen his daughter, I suggested that, to clear her character, he should forthwith bring with him to Foxton the Hackney camellia. As to the existence of this plant I had my doubts, expecting that Eliza had mistaken the variegated

scentless camellia for the unique plant of Foxton. But the bush brought by Drupp proved to be of the same genus. It was streaked with seven colors, it was scented, and, as a proof that Eliza was innocent, still bore the stem from whence the bud, alleged to have been stolen from the Foxton greenhouse, had been reft. Her story thus appeared to be true, but I thought it strange that, at such a juncture, a blossom should also be missing from our local plant. The coincidence was peculiar, the inference doubtful.

"Moy daughter growed this 'ere," explained Drupp, who was quite as cockney in speech as Eliza; "et was browght from Chiner by moy son Sam, es is a stewart on the *Mendelay*. Ses Lizer t'me t'other doy, 'Oi'll jest tike a flower t' Foxton an' see if thet kemmeliar es th' saime es moine.' Which she did, an' now thi've put 'er in quod. Oi 'opes, sir, es 'ow thi'll let 'er orf."

With so clear a defense I thought it extremely probable that they would let her off; but as old Bendel was on the bench I knew the fight would be a tough one. Had Eliza worn the bud when she entered the Gardens, her innocence would have been proved beyond all doubt. Still as the matter stood I had every hope of clearing her character.

When Eliza was again placed in the dock the court was even more crowded than on the former occasion. A rumor had originated—I know not how—that a plant similar to that owned by the society would be put in evidence by the defense. As in duty bound no horticulturist believed this fable. As well say there were two Queens of England, as two rainbow camellias. The Foxton plant was displayed in all its glory, and, lost in admiration, the onlookers exclaimed that there was none like unto it. This biblical exclamation is suitable to the scene, for the plant might have been the golden image of Nebuchadnezzar—so abjectly did its worshipers grovel before it. The mere sight of the missing bud roused them to wrathful denunciations against its ravisher.

When brought before the magistrate, Eliza wept loudly; but on the appearance of George in the witness-box, she recovered her spirits, and called him names. Then she again relapsed into tears, and sniffed provokingly during the subsequent proceedings.

Beanfield deposed that Eliza was not wearing the flower when she entered the Gardens, but he admitted that she carried a paper bag, which he feebly conjectured to contain biscuits. He

had exchanged no words with her, as they were not on friendly terms, but declared that she had made a face at him, and had derisively put out her tongue. When he saw her again, the bud—produced in court—was fastened in the bosom of her dress. He at once inspected the rainbow camellia, and found a blossom missing, upon which evidence he had given Eliza in charge for theft.

Another gardener proved that no buds were wanting when he saw the plant half an hour before Eliza's visit. He was followed by the President of the Horticultural Society, who stated that outside China, to which the species was indigenous, there was no rainbow camellia in existence. The bud produced in court could only have been taken from the Foxton greenhouse. His assertion of the uniqueness of the plant was received with great applause by his fellow horticulturists.

Their jaws dropped when old Drupp brought forward Eliza's specimen. At first they insisted that the petals were painted, but when by direction of old Bendel the plant was handed round, and handled, and smelt, and thoroughly examined, they were reluctantly compelled to admit that it was a genuine rainbow camellia. The admission almost drew tears from their eyes, and they mourned Ichabod! Ichabod! The two plants placed on either side of the magistrate appeared to closely resemble one another, save that Eliza's was the smaller of the two. I forgot to mention that the Hackney plant had eight buds, while the Foxton plant showed twelve. As a blossom had been plucked from each, these were respectively reduced to seven and eleven.

Drupp's evidence, in conjunction with the production of the plant, turned the scale in favor of Eliza. It was all plain sailing when he opened his mouth. The plant belonged to his daughter; it had been brought from China by her brother the steward; under her care it had grown and flowered; and she had plucked a bud to compare with the blooms of the Foxton bush. No link was wanting in the chain of evidence to prove the innocence of the prisoner, and Bendel was reluctantly compelled to discharge her without a stain on her character. I say reluctantly, because he could not forgive Eliza for owning a duplicate of the Foxton fetich, and, taking all the advantage he could, delivered a smart lecture to its iniquitous possessor. There was no applause when Eliza left the dock.

Restored to freedom, she sought George Beanfield; but he, mindful of her threat, had long since departed. He left the town, he even left the country, for a letter addressed from the Continent was received by the president of the society, which cleared up the mystery of the missing Foxton bud. George stated that in attending to the plant he had accidentally knocked off a blossom and, fearful of a reprimand, had burnt it in the greenhouse fire. The appearance of Eliza with a similar bud to that destroyed had afforded him an opportunity of hiding his delinquency, by making her the scapegoat. He did not offer any opinion as to how he thought Eliza had become possessed of the blossom when the only one missing from the bush had been destroyed by himself.

Thus was the innocence of Eliza proved beyond all doubt, and, angered by the unjust aspersions cast on her, she forthwith proceeded to turn the tables on her accusers. The morning following her acquittal, she appeared in my office with a wrathful countenance.

"Now, sir," said she, viciously, "I'm a-gowin' to hev a action agin them Gardins fur lockin' me up."

But the action never came off. The society, knowing it had no defense, owned that it was in the wrong, and offered to compromise. Moreover they feared lest Eliza should sell her plant to a rival society, and thus rob Foxton of the glory of solely possessing the rainbow camellia. After some correspondence, they agreed to settle the action for five hundred pounds, provided Eliza gave them her plant. This she forthwith did, and, having received her damages, paid my fees, and disappeared from Foxton.

A month afterwards my wife again brought up the subject of Eliza Drupp. As usual, the cook was her informant.

"Fred," said she; "Eliza Drupp——"

"Well, what has she been doing now? Stolen another camellia?"

"No. She has married George Beanfield."

"The fellow who gave evidence against her? Impossible."

"It is true. Cook has this morning received a piece of the wedding-cake."

"Well, all I can say, is, that Eliza is of a most forgiving disposition."

"I have no patience with her," replied my wife. "But I think she is ashamed to return to Foxton. She and George have gone to South America."

"A very sensible step to take," said I, weary of the subject. "They can set up on the proceeds of the trial. At all events we have heard the last of Eliza Drupp."

The remark was premature for in less than twelve months I was again discussing Eliza, and learning the reason of her eccentric behavior.

It was on board the *Mandelay* that I heard the truth concerning the matrimonial alliance of our former housemaid. I was ordered to take a sea voyage for the benefit of my health, and as Nell refused to come on the plea of being a bad sailor, I was obliged to make the journey alone. One place was much the same as another to me, provided the instructions of my physician were carried out; so taking the first chance that presented itself, I embarked for China on a Three Star Liner. The ship was comfortable, the passengers sociable, and the table excellent, so the voyage promised to be very pleasant. As a description thereof is not pertinent to the story, I proceed at once to the episode which brought up again the name of Eliza Drupp.

Among the stewards figured a red-haired creature, freckled and stumpy. He was neither my table nor berth attendant, yet he never failed when by any accident I caught his eye to salute me with a knowing grin. This mark of recognition led me to examine him closely, in the expectation of finding him a former client or servant. I could not recall his features, yet they seemed familiar to me. We were in the Bay of Biscay when I spoke to him. The ship was rolling heavily, and on my way to lie down in my cabin, I met with my red-poll'd friend. He smiled as usual, whereupon I asked him if he knew me.

"No, sir," said he with a grin, "but 'Lizer knows y' sir."

"'Lizer?"

"M' sister, sir, 'Lizer Drupp es was."

"Ah, that accounts for the familiar look of your face. You are her brother Sam."

"Yessir. Shell I 'elp y' long t' y' bunk, sir?"

"If you please."

By this unexpected meeting the circumstances of the case recurred to my mind, and I was pleased to meet with Sam. It was he who had brought the camellia to Eliza, and I wished to learn where he procured it, and also why his sister had married her enemy. Sam was not unlike my former client, but, owing to his vocation, had a less pronounced cockney accent. At times, however, the Londoner peeped out.

"How is Eliza?" I asked, when safely bestowed in my bunk.
"And where is Eliza?"

"In Paraguay with 'er 'usband, sir. They're es 'eppy es th' doy es long."

"That is rather curious, Drupp, considering her husband was a witness in that case of——"

Sam interrupted me at this moment by laughing violently. I checked his untoward mirth with a frown, whereupon he wiped his eyes and apologized.

"'Scuse me, sir, but I ken't 'elp lafin' when I think of thet 'ere caise. Y' got 'Lizer foive 'un'red, y' did, sir. She an' George 'ave bowght a ranch in Paraguay an' are gittin' on fine. Don Jorge 'e is now, sir, an' 'Lizer's quite t' laidy."

"Her bad luck was the cause of her good luck," said I epigrammatically; "it was a fortunate thing for Eliza that you brought that rainbow camellia from China."

Sam grinned and again apologized.

"Bless y', sir, I didn't bring no camelliar fro' Chiner, sir."

"Then how did Eliza become possessed of the second plant?"

"George, sir, 'e got 'er slip off t' Foxton plant."

"George!" repeated I in amazement, "but he gave evidence against her. If he got her the slip he must have known——"

"Course 'e did, sir. It was all ploy-actin'. 'Lizer wrot 'ome an' told all about it."

"Then you can tell *me* all about it, Drupp. As I conducted the case I should hear the sequel. It may explain why Eliza married Beanfield."

"Thet it do, sir," said Sam grinning. "It were this waiy, sir. 'Lizer 'ad no money, an' George 'adn't enough to marry on. Th'y wanted to git spliced, an' so 'it on a plan to git money. 'Lizer she was readin' about a cove es got a thousan' poun's fur bein' put in quod when 'e was innercent, so she ses t' George, 'Cawn't we try the saime gaim on an' git enough t' marry on?' An' George, sir, 'ad an idear—'e's a long-eaded chap, sir—fur bein' a gardiner to t' Foxton Society, 'e knew whot a lot th'y thought of thet blessed camelliar. So 'e steals a slip an' tells 'Lizer to mek it grow, an' to tell father es I brought it fro' Chiner. She arsked me t' soy so, an' not knowin' 'er gaim I sid so. But I niver knowed anythin' about it, sir. Then 'Lizer meks it grow es George ses, tho' t'was a long toime growin'. When t' flowers come, she talks one t' Foxton an' walks into th' green'ouse an'——"

"I see it was all arranged between them so as to sue the society and get damages?"

"Yessir. George nipped oif a bud an' burnt it, 'e did. Then 'Lizer, wearin' 'er own comes out an' 'e puts 'er in quod."

"And between the two of them they clear £500?"

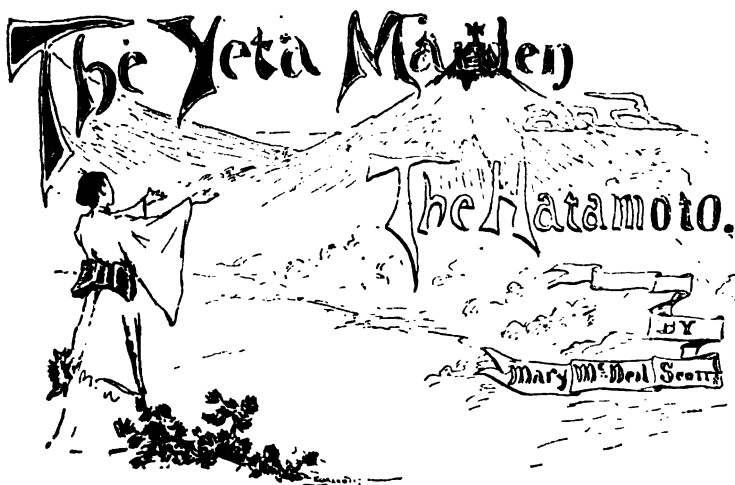
"Yessir, an' then 'e marries 'er. D'ysee, sir?"

"I see, Drupp, and I must say they are a nice pair."

"Thet th'y are, sir. I'd a split their gaine 'ad I know'd it."

After delivering this opinion Drupp departed and I was left to ruminate over his story. I quite believed that he was ignorant of the plot, but was satisfied that had he known he would only have held his tongue if well paid. It was useless to give the benefit of the doubt to one who was of the same stock as Eliza. That artful girl knew her family too well to intrust them with her secret, and, less legal expenses, she and her fellow-conspirator got the whole of the damages to themselves. Much as I condemned their rascality, I could not but admire the cleverness with which they had planned and carried out their scheme. They had deceived Drupp, they had deceived the society, they had deceived me. Their comedy was extremely well acted, and ended quite to their satisfaction. Therefore I say that country wits are at times equal to those of town-bred folks, for though the idea was Eliza's, the conception and execution of the scheme emanated from the bucolic brain of George.

I told the whole story to my wife when I returned home, and she was very severe on her former housemaid. Naturally enough she could not keep it to herself, and in a short time the history of the deception soon became town-talk. At first the members of the Horticultural Society were angered at being so treated, but as the delinquents were in South America, it was wisely concluded to let the matter drop. They possessed both rainbow camellias, and, warned by the trickery of George and Eliza, watched the plants with renewed vigilance. I do not think that any one else will have the chance of stealing a slip of the Foxton fetich, but should a third rainbow camellia make its appearance in the market, old Bendel is quite resolved not to be hoodwinked a second time. He often regrets that he did not give Eliza six months, but is now too late, for the conspirators are now engaged in farming at the Antipodes. They ought to rear a rainbow camellia if only to remind them of their iniquity.



INTRODUCTIONS are, unlike small contributions, seldom thankfully received. I myself am not partial to them, and would much prefer making my own acquaintanceship with a story, but in this case it is absolutely necessary to inform the reading public what a Yeta maiden is, and what a Hatamoto.

In the old feudal days of Japan, when the Mikado was but a secluded divinity, too transcendental to hold the gross reins of the government, and all temporal power belonged to the generalissimo or Tycoon, there was a class of nobles, now abolished, known as the Hatamoto. These were the direct supporters and officials of the Tycoon's court, and were renowned for their pride, wealth and power.

In rank they were second only to princes of the blood, each having absolute jurisdiction over his domain and its countless serfs and retainers.

Dropping now, along the social thermometer in degrees of priests, *samurai* or soldiers, clerks, merchants, artisans, peasants, fishermen, and day-laborers, we reach a zero of nothingness, and far, far below all zeroes, grovel the wretched Yetas, the Pariahs of Japan.

Originally a community of felons and outcasts, their odium has become hereditary, and to them is allotted all degrading and

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polluting tasks, such as slaying cattle, working in leather, transfixing crucified prisoners with spears, and burying them when dead.

One of the most rigid laws of the Buddhist doctrine is against manipulating dead bodies, and from this has grown the stigma attached to the tanner and the mender of shoes.

This latter occupation is one of the few in which the Yeta is permitted to engage, and one can at any time see them wandering about the streets of Tokio, silently indicating, by the broken clogs and new leather thongs, suspended from their shoulders, that they are prepared for their cobbler's task.

When a Japanese, even of the laboring class, stops to have his shoes examined or attended to, he takes the greatest care never to



come in contact with the wretched artisan, and when the work is finished throws the few copper coins on the ground before him

as one would cast scraps to a dog. The young girls are allowed to become wandering minstrels, provided that they never appear without the peaked straw head-covering, much the shape of a thatched roof, and the insignia of their degradation. These poor outcasts dare not enter a temple or tea-house, and when they wish to buy food must wrap the coin in clean paper and place it on the doorstep of the inn or shop, then kneeling, lift a bowl or vessel of some kind belonging to themselves, and into this the repast is poured.

It is possible for a person of higher birth to sink to the Yeta level through successive stages of debauchery and dishonor, but, born of these, no power, not even the touch of the Sacred Emperor, can cleanse from the stain or avert from his descendants the hereditary doom.

So now, having defined the two extremes of the Japanese social system, I will relate a story which deals with both, and shows that love, even in Oriental lands, is a god who laughs at human restrictions and defies artificial classification.

THE STORY.

Many years ago, when the Tycoons were in the height of their power, and the Hatamoto formed the wealthiest and most arrogant class in Japan, there was a certain young noble, Takoji Genzaboro by name, who, from his wealth, bravery and personal beauty, was considered a prime favorite of the plethoric Dai Koku San, the God of Luck and Riches.

Each day, on his road to the palace, he crossed a well-known bridge of the Asakusa Canal, and upon one of these expeditions he noticed that a cobbler, recently established on the corner of the bridge, always prostrated himself as the noble cortège approached, and remained with forehead in the dust until they were well beyond.

For some days Genzaboro ignored this humble demonstration, but as it promised to continue indefinitely, he at last asked an attendant whether there was any reason why that particular Yeta was allowed to salute



him, when, as a class, they were debarred from the privilege of showing courtesy to those so far above them.

The servant declared that he knew of no such reason; then, drawing his sword, started back with the intention of cutting the wretched culprit into pieces, and throwing them into the canal.

But his master stopped him by a gesture and said that it was a matter of little consequence. Nevertheless Genzaboro's curiosity was piqued, and he determined to cross the bridge alone next morning and find occasion to question his humble admirer. Strangely enough, next day, when he was within a few feet of the bridge, the thong of his lacquered clog became loosened. Beckoning to the cobbler, he kicked the sandal toward him and, as the man bent over his task, asked him sternly:

"By what right do you prostrate yourself each morning as I cross the bridge?"

The Yeta lifted, for an instant, a pale and terrified face, then crouching to the earth burst into piteous sobs and tears.

The Hatamoto, surprised and somewhat touched by this display of emotion, spoke in gentler tones and assured him that there was nothing to fear.

"Alas! noble lord," sobbed the Yeta, "it is not only the fear. I am Yendo, the son of your honorable father's gardener. Do you not remember? I played with your highness in our childhood!"

"Is it *possible*," cried Genzaboro, "that you are my little playfellow, the son of a respectable gardener! Through what misfortune did you sink to so vile a condition?"

"Through my own follies and debaucheries," wept the remorseful Yendo.

"Then lose no time in extricating yourself," cried the Hatamoto. "I will employ my power to assist you, and, meanwhile, here is a small present which may be of service."

With these words he tossed down three gold *riyo*. Yendo, protesting against such lavish generosity, grovelled upon the earth and wept aloud his gratitude and his promises of reformation. During this conversation two young women of the Yeta class had drawn silently near, and now stood at a little distance, waiting to speak with Yendo when his task should be accomplished. The elder of the two, O Kuma, a rosy, bright-eyed girl of twenty, carried a *samisen* slung across her shoulder by gilt cords. She was a singing girl, or wandering minstrel, and the sweetheart of Yendo.

Her companion, O Koyo, the sixteen-year-old daughter of one of the Yeta chiefs, was renowned among her own people for gentleness, grace and beauty ; and, indeed, it would be difficult



to find, even among the sacred circle of the Mikado, a lovelier face and form than was given to this child of a polluted race.

As Genzaboro turned, their eyes met, lingered as though they could not disunite ; their faces flushed, their very hearts seemed to swell to a new, strange harmony, and then they passed on, destined from that one meeting to be playthings in the hands of love and fate.

Later, Yendo received a communication from his new patron, appointing a meeting, to be held at dusk of that day in a tea-house of a remote quarter of the town.

Yendo was punctual to the moment, but even then the Hatamoto was before him, pacing anxiously up and down the narrow room in the disguise of a common soldier.

Yendo, at the instant of recognition, fell at his feet, renewing his protestations of devotion and gratitude, but the nobleman broke in impatiently, crying :

“ Even now can you repay me fourfold ! Arrange for me a

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meeting with that beautiful vision which I beheld this day, and you shall feel my gratitude."

Fear and consternation again seized Yendo. "My Lord! My Lord!" he stammered. "That was O Koyo, a Yeta maiden.



Her very touch would be disgrace! I beseech you—do not think of her! It is impossible!"

"Nothing is impossible," cried Genzaboro. "I tell you, I must and will meet this beautiful O Koyo!"

"But, your Highness——"

"No excuses! There are none to compare with her in loveliness. Where is she? Where is her home?"

In vain poor Yendo wept and reasoned. In vain he declared

that such a state of things would lead to death and ruin for all involved.

Genzaboro would listen to nothing, and allowed his humble friend to leave him only after a promise that he would use every effort to arrange the meeting, bringing his answer the following night.

As they parted, the young nobleman slipped into Yendo's hand three more *riyo* and a written slip of paper addressed:

"To the Flower of Asakusa."

Yendo went down the narrow streets with much muttering and shaking of the head. He fingered the six *riyo* over and over again, wondering if they were worth the trouble and danger that he was asked to undertake, but he could not come to a satisfactory conclusion. Then, to console himself, he read the letter intrusted to him.

It was a short love-poem of the style known as "Uta" or "a song," and translated would read:

"Fair maid, who, like some spot-
less lotus-flower
Lifts through the waters of
thy low estate,
Behold thy sun, thy lover from
that hour
When first he knew thy
beauty consummate.
(Signed.) HE WHO MET THEE
ON THE BRIDGE."

Yendo sighed more deeply than before, and finally, making his way to the home of his sweetheart O Kuma, he confided to her the strange story, and offered to be guided by her advice.

For a little while O Kuma remained buried in thought, then silently she led him to a little room near by, and pointed him to look softly within. There sat little O Koyo, her long, thick hair unbound, her eyes sunken with weeping. Before her, in the full light of the one poor candle, lay an old book that she had found and which contained a history of the different classes of Japan,



and the laws and restrictions governing them. The page was opened at an illustration of a Yeta girl singing before a temple, while the priests ran out to motion her away with scorn and repulsion in each gesture.

Every time that she bent over to read, her tears came anew, and her low, stifled sobs were more piteous than louder signs of grief.

Yendo and O Kuma turned and looked at one another with humid eyes.

"Shall it be to-morrow night?"

Yendo murmured "Yes."

Several months passed away, only to find Genzaboro more deeply infatuated than ever with his low-born wife. They had been married according to the rites of the Yeta class, O Koyo's father performing the brief ceremony which united them, but their meetings were, perforce, still conducted with the greatest secrecy.

It was Genzaboro's delight to teach her the customs of the titled women; to train her pretty lips to utter the pompous phrases of the court formalities; to drape her dainty form in the most gorgeous robes

that wealth and power could procure. Often he would snatch her from the midst of some mock observance of aristocratic mummery, and straining her to his breast, exclaim:



"Thou couldst put them to the blush even now, my Lotus-flower; those lofty dames, who would shudder at thy presence. There is none among them to compare with thee!"

All went well for nearly a year, and it became rumored that the Hatamoto was losing his interest in the affairs of State, and that the Tycoon feared some hostile influence. Yendo, hearing this, hastened to warn his master, but found him so entirely engrossed in O Koyo, that he was oblivious to all beside.

Matters grew more alarming each day, and finally the two confidants, seeing that argument was of no avail, resorted to stratagem.

They forged a letter to the father of O Koyo, informing him that discovery was imminent, and that Genzaboro had said he could not meet O Koyo again. Spies were already on his track, and another visit would be death and ruin to both.

He also advised that they should leave Yeddo, until all danger was past. The old man, suspecting no deceit, imparted his terror to O Koyo, and, despite her tears and supplications, forced her to go with him to a distant province. The same day on which the letter was forged, Yendo went to the Hatamoto, and told him that O Koyo had fallen desperately ill, and that her father had taken her to a famous Yeta doctor, who resided at some distance from the city; but they would soon return. For some time the young lord waited patiently, then, as he heard nothing, went to the tea-house in search of Yendo, but found him absent. Again and again he went, always with the same result. One day, by accident, he caught a glimpse of him hurrying down a narrow street. He was soon overtaken, and Genzaboro fiercely demanded the reason of his long silence.

"Pardon, my lord," cried the man, in confusion. "I would have sought your Highness had there been news of O Koyo. I have had no word or message from her since she went. I dare not think what has become of her."

"Have you made every effort to hear?" inquired the Hatamoto. "Do you wish me to *die* of disappointment and love?"



"Your lordship had best forget——"

Genzaboro seized him with a grip of steel. "Villain!" he fumed, "are you swerving from your fealty? Another such word, and I slay you with my own hands."

The wretched cobbler fell shrieking to the earth, pouring forth a thousand apologies and excuses, intermingled with promises to set out at once in search of O Koyo, but at the same time inwardly assuring himself that should he escape alive from the clutches of this fiery young nobleman, he would lose no time in making his way to a safer vicinity.

Days passed with no word or sign to the unhappy lover, and at last, filled with apprehension and despair, he plunged into a life of debauchery, intent upon drowning his tormenting thoughts. One night, while carousing in a tea-house of the lowest type, he happened upon a man by the name of Sazen, formerly one of the retainers of Genzaboro's father, but now a *ronin* or wandering knight. The surprise at the meeting was mutual, but after some conversation, in which Sazen described the many provinces that he had visited during his late wanderings, Genzaboro burst out with the story of his love and misery, imploring Sazen to tell him if during his journeys he had seen any person answering to the description of O Koyo and her father.

"Why, yes," replied he quickly. "I know well the village where the Yeta chief is now residing, and have heard that his beautiful and only daughter is slowly dying of love for a high-born lover who has cast her off."

"It is false," cried Genzaboro, springing up with his hand to his sword. "I did not leave her; we were separated by treachery and deceit. Take me to her, Sazen, and you shall know how a Hatamoto can reward his friends."

"It is impossible, my lord," answered the other. "They are in a Yeta village, where it is death for one of another class to enter. But I will send a letter to her father, and I do not doubt that the girl can be brought to Yeddo."

"An eternity of waiting!" cried the young lover. "O Koyo may die ere the summons find her."

"Nay, my lord," answered Sazen, dryly. "A letter from thee will restore her to life."

After long discussion and many suggestions from both parties, it was decided that Sazen should despatch, that night, a Yeta carrier to O Koyo's father, with a letter informing him of Yendo's treachery, and requesting that O Koyo should be brought at

once to Yeddo, where she could find secrecy and a shelter in the home of Sazen.

"What shall we do concerning the traitor Yendo," remarked Sazen in a thoughtful tone when this much had been arranged. "He must not know of the girl's return."

"I will slay him," cried Genzaboro. "That will end the matter."

"Or expose it," supplemented the other. "The better plan will be to use his own weapons against him. I will instruct the Yeta chief to let it be known that O Koyo has thrown herself into the river from despair. Yendo, hearing of this, will return to Yeddo, but, overcome by remorse at his share in her death, will gladly forget the whole matter."

"An excellent idea!" cried Genzaboro. "You are indeed a true friend and servitor."

Then, having arranged a meeting to take place at Sazen's house three nights hence, Genzaboro pressed upon his friend the acceptance of ten gold *ryo*, and hastened toward his castle, thrilled with hope and expectation.

When the letter was first received by O Koyo's father, he was undecided whether or not to participate in such intricate schemes, but his daughter's tears and supplications soon prevailed upon him and the rumor of her death was put into circulation. That night they left the village by stealth, reaching the city the following day, to find everything in readiness for the meeting of the now ecstatic lovers.

Genzaboro, profiting by past experience, was most scrupulous in the discharge of his official duties, and rose higher and higher in the esteem of the Tycoon, who little dreamed that all this loyalty and diligence was but to avert suspicion from a stolen happiness, and shelter the little outcast, whom he loved better than his own life. In Sazen's humble, suburban cottage, surrounded by thickest hedges of tea and bamboo, and guarded by a stone gate of unusual solidity, the reunited lovers spent hours of perfect happiness, and their love seemed to strengthen with each day.

When Yendo heard of the death of little O Koyo, he felt some remorse, it is true, but his relief was an emotion far sincerer. He and O Kuma lost no time in returning to Yeddo, and establishing themselves in their own quarters.

Here, a few days later, came the Yeta chief, bringing with him a small present of money in the name of the dead, as is the custom among friends.

For some time Yendo refused it, and his lamentations over the untimely death of O Koyo were such, that the tea-house trembled. But eventually he allowed himself to be over-persuaded, and, when the visit was over, bade the old man farewell with a thousand expressions of affection and sympathy. During the formalities at the doorstep, the Yeta chief drew from his sleeve a fresh paper handkerchief, and as he did so a letter fell unnoticed from his sleeve.



But Yendo's quick eye caught it, and he hid it with his foot until alone, then of course read it.

As ill-fortune had decreed, it was the letter from Sazen, exposing Yendo's designs, and advising the report of O Koyo's death.

A traitor is always doubly indignant at a treachery directed against himself, and Yendo's fury can be imagined when he found that he had been so completely tricked and outwitted.

That evening at twilight he went to Sazen's home, but was denied admittance.

At this he made such an uproar that Sazen was forced to come to the gate.

"Who are you that so rudely demand an entrance to my house?" he sternly asked.

"I am one Yendo," was the bold reply. "My lord Genzaboro knows me well."

"Are you not the Yeta who mended shoes on Asakusa bridge?"

"I am he, and a friend of my Lord Genzaboro."

"That cannot gain you admittance here. No Yeta shall desecrate my home."

"Indeed!" cried Yendo furiously. "But you are not always so discreet. How is it that even now the girl O Koyo has her dwelling beneath your roof?"

Sazen strove to hide his consternation.

"What do you mean, wretch?" he cried. "I know no such person. Begone, vile miscreant! Your presence is pollution."

"So be it," screamed the Yeta, beside himself with rage. "I will begone, and the Governor of Yeddo shall know of this to-night."

With these words he turned and started down the street.

"Wait, you slave," cried Sazen, at his wit's end. "I will speak with you."

But Yendo hurried on muttering curses and threats of vengeance, and Sazen following in his long silken house-robcs could scarcely keep near him.

It was now dark and neither of the men carried lanterns. By some strange fatality, the thong of Yendo's sandal snapped, hurling him to the ground; and ere he could scramble to his feet, Sazen was upon him with a dagger.

"Traitor! Villain!" panted Sazen as he plunged the cruel weapon to its hilt. "Will you indeed betray my Lord?"

So sudden, so apt had been the passionate attack, that Yendo was given no chance for resistance.

A few wild contortions, one awful scream of death, and he fell upon his face to rise no more, while Sazen, terrified at his own deed, sped as one pursued by demons down a narrow street, not once remembering that he had left in the possession of his murdered foe, a written witness against himself and his master.



When the body of Yendo was found, the fatal letter was tightly clenched in his death-cold grasp, and was not removed until taken before the Governor of Yeddo.

When the terrible facts, thus disclosed, were given to the Tycoon, his grief and fury knew no bounds, and by his order the two unhappy lovers were torn apart and incarcerated in separate dungeons. The crime of the young nobleman was so unspeakable, so entirely beyond the tenets of any code of laws, the whole circle of the Hatamoto was summoned to court to assist in the decision of suitable punishment.

The youth, rank, beauty of the offender and the depth of his self-sacrificing love, were but as straws in the face of the great tempest of horror and indignation against him when his crime was first made known. Some of the judges proposed that he should be immersed in boiling oil, after the manner of thieves and highway robbers; others, that he should be stretched and bound above a growing bamboo shoot, until its silicate spear should slowly penetrate his body; and a few of the most rigorous even hinted at crucifixion, that most awful and ignominious of all deaths.

The Yeta chief and his daughter, being minor offenders, were released in a short time, and simply banished from the island of Nippon; but Genzaboro, for seven days and seven nights, was kept in the dreaded *Kuroano*, a tiny, fetid cell beneath the governor's castle, and then conducted into the presence of the Tycoon to receive his sentence. It was an imposing sight: the Tycoon seated upon a raised platform covered with gorgeous silks and cushionings, and breaking the vista of two long, converging lines of Hatamoto, who sat some twelve feet apart, facing each other in all the richness of ceremonial robes and trappings.

Every face was downcast, each eye fixed moodily upon the matted floor; the Tycoon sterner and sadder than any other, and not one friendly glance was raised as Genzaboro's tall, stately figure slowly made its way to the foot of the throne.

The guards stood about as if cast in bronze and iron, while the dull glow of the massive painted walls shed over the scene a gloomy brightness. Genzaboro paused, but did not kneel to offer the Hatamoto's greeting, he only stood with brave, sad eyes fixed upon his master's face. There was no sound, no motion to break the thrall of suppressed emotion, and the moments grew endless with tense expectancy.

Finally there came from somewhere—some direction, the click of a *samurai's* sword against its mate.

The Tycoon rose quickly, and as though forcing himself to a duty, met squarely Genzaboro's unflinching regard.

At the same instant the faces of the two hundred Hatamoto turned toward him and their glances struck like steel against the marble of his countenance.

The Tycoon cleared his throat and attempted to speak.

"Kneel," he whispered hoarsely, "thou art still a Hatamoto though disgraced."

Genzaboro fell at his feet, thankful only that his face was hidden.

"Thy monstrous crime is known, and the Order which thou hast shamed is here to pass thy sentence."

No reply.

"Hast thou no defense—no desire to plead for mercy?" cried the prince impatiently, while the nobles frowned and cast hostile glances upon the culprit.

"Speak, Genzaboro Takoji," the Tycoon said, with a falter in his stern voice.

"Aye, my lord! to thee!" cried Genzabora, impulsively. "To thee, but not to them. There is no mercy with them. I have one prayer. By the great love in which I have held thee, shall I speak?"

"Speak."

"Let me die as a Hatamoto, not as a dog. Return the sword which I have forfeited, that I may wipe out disgrace in the act of *hara-kiri*."

"Hist!" "Nay! Nay!" "Bold fellow!" "He is mad!" "It shall not be!" came in ejaculations and hisses of indignation from the lines of Hatamoto.

"Thou hearest them, Genzaboro," said the Tycoon, half sadly.

The young man had risen to his full height from the knees; he cast one quick look along the line of his merciless judges, and then, creeping nearer, nearer to his master, brought to bear upon him the full anguish, power and magnetism of his splendid eyes.

"My Prince! My Prince!" he breathed. "Thy sword—thy short sword."

As one fascinated and compelled, the Tycoon leaned toward him.

Genzaboro's face broke into a smile of celestial sweetness, his eyes lit into effulgence.

"Thy sword," he breathed again, and extended his hand.

The Hatamoto sprang to their feet, the guards gave hoarse ejaculations of fear and warning, but Genzaboro held his master's sword, and in another moment had plunged it into his own body.



The Tycoon looked up as one dazed, as the throng of furious and baffled knights came surging to his feet.

"Stand back, my lords," he said, in low, sweet tones; his hand spread protectingly above Genzaboro's dying frame. "Your honor is avenged."

Some weeks after this tragic scene and the tumult and excitement consequent upon it, the family of the young nobleman was permitted to erect above his grave a slender shaft of granite, commemorating his youth and beauty, and also bewailing the folly which led him to this untimely end.

All of their influence, however, could not secure the privilege of interring him in that portion of the cemetery set apart for the nobility, and so the lonely column lifted its head from amid the rude wooden tablets of the peasant class.

It was night and a pale moon blossomed up from the tremulous sea-mists, and rose high over the great plain of Yeddo and the huddled burial-grounds which fringed its outskirts.

In one of the humblest of these, a little *haka-wara* (field of

tombs) planted along terraces of a bare and desolated hill, the shaft which bore Genzaboro's name stood like a sentinel amid the crouching peasant-mounds. All was hushed and awful with the double mystery of night and death, save for the low, sweet voice of an *unguise*, that had found a lonely resting-place on the tip of the column. Suddenly the song was shattered and the bird darted down toward the valley, startled by the approach of a dark figure that crept up from among the tombs. It was a woman, a Yeta; feeble and old to judge from the staff she carried, and the slow uncertain steps with which she made her way.

The peaked straw hood of the Yeta women was drawn down at each side, entirely concealing her face. Before Genzaboro's grave she paused, and lifted her eyes to read.

The high, clear moon drove interlacing shadows across the narrow white walks of this City of the Dead, and brought out in sharp intaglio the name sunken deep in the surface of the stone. Like stone the old woman stood beneath. Her staff fell to the ground, her old hood, slipping backward, revealed the glossy hair which it had covered.

Slowly, slowly she lifted her hands, always with her eyes upon that carven name; slowly she unwound the faded girdle, cast aside the Yeta garb, and threw herself upon the ground. O Koyo—as he had best loved her, as he had seen her for the last sweet time.

"Anata! Anata!" "Thou-Thou!" she cried again and again, patting and caressing the rigid stone with loving, childlike hands. "They could not keep me. It is O Koyo. Thine own O Koyo!"

At each sob, at every movement of her supple body, the gold of her gorgeous robes trembled and shone in the moonlight.

She paused to listen. Surely there were footsteps approaching. Perhaps the guards have tracked her.

"Anata! Anata!" she cried again, and there is exultation in her voice. "My love, my master! I also died when thou didst cease to live. Behold the last poor act that love can give thee."

A flash of steel, a quick gasp, and the tender cheek, now crushed against the stone, will soon be colder than the polished marble which it leans against.

The guards, running up, found but a lifeless body to reward their long search, and the Tycoon, hearing of all that she had

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braved to lay her life down at her lover's grave, gave orders that she should be buried at his feet.

And there to this day can the two graves be seen, and down through the legends and stories of Japan there is no truer example of that great love which overcomes all barriers, and defies death itself, than is shown in this sad history of the Yeta Maiden and the Hatamoto.



THE MAN OF TWO LIVES*

BY EDWARD M. WEYER



BEFORE his death—the result of solitude and old age—Jean Ferney kept a dingy little shop in a certain street near the Rue Charlot, Paris. It was not a respectable neighborhood; indeed, the police considered it a very questionable one, though no crime was ever committed there. Perhaps its ill-repute was due to the reticence of its inhabitants and their inclination to attend too strictly to their own affairs, to know or profess to know nothing of their neighbors, and to have forgotten in a large measure even their own previous history.

The street was narrow and dark; so narrow that the sunshine only visited the pavement while the sun was very near the meridian, and never succeeded in entering Ferney's shop further than the door-sill. To the right of the door was a show-window, in which a few old coins and time-stained manuscripts were displayed, but so covered with dust that it was better to go within if you should wish to examine them. Above the door hung a sign:

"J. Malplaquet, Expert Chirographist."

Not *Jean Ferney*, oh, no; he had some years before been seized with an inexplicable antipathy for that name, and changed it at the same time as his business, place of residence and wearing apparel; at the same time that he shaved off his mustache, let his beard grow and bleached his hair somewhat. But, perhaps, we should not speak of this transformation, as he never referred to it himself.

One day as Ferney, or Malplaquet, to be more polite, was sitting at his desk deciphering a bit of writing under the light of his smoky lamp, the door opened and a man entered. He, too, seemed a rather secretive individual, and at the moment you might have found a set of false whiskers in his pocket, together with a pistol and a pair of handcuffs—but that is neither

* Written for Short Stories.—Copyrighted.

here nor there—for at present he was without hirsute adornment, he was plain La Rouche, clad in his ordinary suit of ministerial black, with his broad felt hat as usual drawn well down over his piercing gray eyes.

"Good morning, La Rouche," said Ferney, glancing up from his work.

"Good morning, Malplaquet," was the answer, as La Rouche seated himself on a chest at the side of the desk.

"How is Constantin, and the detective force in general?"

"Constantin has been missing for the last three days; one of his slow but sure schemes, I suppose. He is interested in the same case as myself now. Will you inform me what sort of person wrote this scrap, Malplaquet?"

Malplaquet took the paper handed to him.

"Where was this unearthed, La Rouche?"

"It was found in the secret drawer of the writing-desk of the late diplomatist, Jules Foreau. The drawer was discovered by a member of the family only five days ago."

"The writing," said Malplaquet, without waiting to comprehend the answer to his question in his eagerness to commence deciphering, "I see it bears no date, but from its state of preservation, the yellow stains here in the righthand corner and the degree to which the ink has faded, it was written, I should judge, about nine years ago."

"Precisely; that was the date of the decease of the recipient," said La Rouche, taking his note-book from his pocket.

"The characters," the adept continued, "are small, indicating literary tastes. The peculiar formation of the d's is undoubtedly due to much practice in the writing of Greek. The handwriting smacks of the university, a German university it may be, since there appears to be a slight touch of German angularity in the small letters. The writer was certainly a scholarly man, though perhaps a quack in some respects. He was subtle-diplomatic, as is shown by the indistinct endings of some of the words; reticent, shown by the shortness of the g and the y; in short, you have a man to deal with, La Rouche, a man.

"Another thing which may aid you. This was written by an imperfect hand, a hand mutilated in some way; a finger amputated probably.

"Now that we have determined all that the chirography can explain, may I have the pleasure of reading the document?" asked Malplaquet politely. The detective nodded.

TO M. JULES FOREAU :—When this is placed on your study-table your very dear friend and colleague Paul Rapin will have been dead one hour. His body will be found lying face downward in the street near the south end of Pont d'Austerlitz. No signs of violence will be found; he has to all appearance died of disease of the heart. The affair is purely political, I assure you. This letter is to warn you not to attend the Assembly tomorrow or the day following. Of course, you will not dare in the present state of the times to disclose this which I have written, and to which therefore, that you may know instead of suspect me, I without hesitation affix my name: FERNEY.

The reading ended.

"Foreau went to the Assembly the day following," said La Rouché, "—and died of heart-disease the same evening," added Malplaquet, smiling.

"Ferney, Ferney," muttered Malplaquet. "I have heard the name before. Look in the municipal death records of April, 1852. I think you will there find note of his decease, my friend."

La Rouché, closing his note-book, rose to go and held out his hand. Dr. Malplaquet grasped it with his left, for his right hand was mutilated, lacking the first joint of the forefinger and detectives are sometimes keen observers.

The next day the detective was perusing the municipal death records, when he stopped at an entry which ran :

Ferney, Jean, was observed drowning in the Seine April 9th. Help reached the spot too late. For witnesses refer to Testimony of Witnesses, vol. 196—3—90.

Body unrecovered.

The last two words had evidently been interpolated in the record at a later date.

The record was made in the disguised handwriting of Ferney—but La Rouché was not a chirographist.

A COMEDY IN CRAPE *

BY A. L. HARRIS



VE half a mind to try it," said Mr. Timothy Yabsley. "Of course, I know it's a risk, but then, sich is life. From the moment you draw your first breath you're beset with trials and tribbylations and risks of all sorts. There's danger lurking in the injer-rubber tube of your feeding-bottle, and rocks ahead, with convulsions to follow, in the cutting of your own teeth. The question is," reflectively chewing the end of the pénholder, "the question is, whether, with so many risks ready made and lying in wait for you round every corner, it's worth your while looking up a fresh one for yourself? I dunno, I really dunno, what to be at. Soon's ever I get myself pretty well screwed up to the point, the shop bell's sure to ring, and by the time I've done serving a customer I'm all run down again."

He paused to run his hands through his hair, which had already—what there was of it—somewhat of the appearance of the crest of a perplexed cockatoo. Having done which he again fell to studying a small slip of printed matter which lay before him.

"I can't but admit as it reads well," he observed, still as though addressing an invisible third party. "It reads well; the question is, would it work as well as it reads? I think I'll just run over it again."

The text of the above soliloquy proved to be an extract cut from the advertising sheet of a local newspaper, and ran as follows:

"Matrimonial Agency; strictly private, confidential, genuine—Mrs. Wilkins has several respectable widows, age thirty-four to forty-five; suitable for small tradésmen and others. Write in confidence to 9 Crab Apple Row, Cowslip. Stamp."

Mr. Yabsley again had recourse to the penholder while he continued to muse aloud:

"I'm what you might call a small tradesman myself—small, but snug. The thing is, do I want a widder? I've managed without

* A Selection from "All the Year Round."

one for a matter of five-and-fifty year, and I might have done so comfortably till the end but for that dratted advertisement. Ever since it caught my eye I've been sort of unsettled, not knowing my own mind two minnits together. I don't doubt but what a widder'd be companionable; and I do find it a bit lonesome sometimes after the shop's shut and the boy gone home. But then I've heard as widders is ticklish handling, and she mightn't hit it off with Jacob."

Jacob was the cat, and a by no means unimportant member of the ménage. At the moment referred to he was sitting with his eyes fixed contemplatively on the top bar of the grate, and had just come to the conclusion that he could relish a bloater for his supper.

"Jacob," said Mr. Yabsley, disturbing his train of thought, "what's your opinion of widders?"

Jacob turned his head slowly round, looked at him for a second or so, as though casting the matter over in his mind, and then winked.

"Jacob," said his master reprovingly, "you're a rank bad 'un."

Then rumpling his hair, thirdly and in conclusion, he remarked decisively:

"Anyhow, I'll sleep on it."

The shop, which bore the name of "T. Yabsley" over the door, was a tobacconist's and newsmonger's—the composite business being conducted by T. Yabsley with the aid of the boy. The latter took down the shutters, swept out the shop, cleaned windows and knives, broke crockery, and made himself generally useful, in return for three and sixpence a week and his dinner.

When the tobacconist came downstairs next morning his face was still wearing the worried, irresolute look which he had taken to bed with him.

He was a precise, spare little man, clean shaven, with the exception of two small straggling tufts of side-whiskers; which whiskers, together with the residue of a head of hair, were, like his clothes, of a useful drab tint. He wore spectacles and a blue necktie with white spots, which last article of adornment he fondly believed bestowed upon him a sporting air, not altogether incompatible in one whose stock in trade included the *Sportsman* as well as *The Christian World*.

Having taken in the milk and boiled the kettle, he next pro-

ceeded to cook his own breakfast ; for the boy did not put in an appearance until later ; for with the exception of a woman who came in now and then to "clean up," Mr. Yabsley "did" for himself.

There were sausages for breakfast, and after having carefully wiped out the frying-pan, he set about cooking these delicacies with a dexterity that bespoke ample experience.

The sausages frizzled gaily. Mr. Yabsley gazed beyond them into futurity.

" 'Suitable for small tradesmen,' " he murmured, turning them with a fork. " 'Ages, thirty-four to forty-five.' Which, under the circumstances, would be the most suitable ? A thirty-fourer or a forty-fiver ? Being a fifty-fiver myself, I should say——"

Here in his preoccupation he mistook the handle of the frying-pan for the poker, with such fatal result that the sausages rolled into the cinders, while some of the boiling fat took Jacob between the joints of the harness and made him swear like a trooper.

"Drat it!" exclaimed Mr. Yabsley, "I'll write for a widder first thing after breakfast."

And before another hour had passed over T. Yabsley's head, a letter, bearing the superscription, "Mrs. Wilkins, 9 Crab Apple Row, Cowslip," had been dispatched on its way.

The letter though short was to the point. It simply said :

"Please forward sample widow on approval."

Mr. Yabsley's hand shook a good deal that day, and some of the best bird's-eye was scattered on the floor. Also, he once ran the risk of offending an exceptionally serious-minded customer by proffering *The Family Herald* in the place of *The Methodist Recorder*.

"I rather think," he communed, apropos of this, "I rather think as I shall turn this branch of the business over to the widder—that is, if she turns out satisfactory. Bless me, though!" with a start, "under sich circumstances, she won't be a widder, she'll be Mrs. T. Yabsley."

He looked around nervously as though to assure himself that there was no one lurking within earshot.

"Timothy, my man," he continued, "you must be uncommon careful, or you'll be compromising of yourself, that's what you'll be doing. And now I come to think of it," he continued, visibly disturbed, "I have heard as widders are main artful. Bless me, I wish I'd never sent that letter! Why a sample might turn up

at any minnit, and the boy gone home to his tea and never no knowing how long he'll take over it."

The perspiration broke out upon his forehead at the thought of his unprotected condition. Accordingly he retired to his parlor behind the shop; and whenever the bell rang, his eyebrows might be seen cautiously reconnoitring over the top of the red moreen curtain that shielded the apartment from the public gaze. Still he did not feel altogether safe until the shutters were up and the door of the establishment secured for the night.

He came downstairs next day feeling quite light-hearted, and ate his breakfast with a relish. The boy was late that morning—you could have counted the days in the month when he wasn't late on the fingers of one hand. Still this was more than just the usual half-hour behind time which was only to be expected.

Mr. Yabsley waited for him some while, promising him a dressing down when he did put in an appearance.

"I s'pose I'll have to take down the shutters myself, after all," he remarked irritably. "I've a good mind to stop it out of that boy's pay. Anyhow, I'll give him another five minnits."

So far from any result being attained thereby, he might just as well have kept the five minutes, for at the end of that period there was no boy, and the shutters were still blocking out the daylight. Whereupon, vowing vengeance, which he was perfectly aware he would never have the strength of mind to carry out, he proceeded reluctantly to perform the derogatory task of taking down his own shutters.

He had only just attacked the second or so when his attention was attracted by a slight cough, which seemed to come from somewhere up in the air, and turning around sharply he was, as he subsequently described it, struck all of a heap to find that it had originated from a black brobdingnagian female figure, which, as it loomed before his startled eyes, appeared to cut off the street, and the sky, and humanity generally, and leave him a solitary, isolated atom beneath the shadow of his approaching Fate.

Even then, however, there was an instant's pause before his mind allowed itself to grasp the full significance of that black-garbed form. Then it coughed again, a cough that was at once interrogative and introductory, and Mr. Yabsley perceived that it wore weeds! Those weeds seemed to choke his very soul! It was the sample!

Still grasping the shutter, he retreated step by step until he had

gained the comparative safety of the shop. The sample followed.

A third cough of a more assertive nature than the other two made the little tobacconist's knees knock together. Then :

"T. Yabsley, I believe?" came the inquiry in an insinuating voice about a foot above his head.

"Yes, no—that is, quite so," he gasped.

"I've come about the advertisement," it went on.

"Wha—what advertisement?" stammered Mr. Yabsley, with the intent of gaining time, and still making a shield of the shutter.

"You know," was the significant answer, with a simper that had the effect of a cold door-key upon his vertebræ.

"If I could only put the counter between us," was his despairing thought.

"You know," repeated the apparition—if the term could be applied to sixteen stone or so of solid flesh and blood—"the advertisement you wrote about? Oh, you needn't try to deceive me, you naughty man!" holding up a forefinger cased in sanitary black cotton—when I say sanitary, I mean to imply that there was no lack of ventilation. "You naughty, naughty man!" She came a step or two nearer him, the floor quivering beneath her tread. "It's too bad of you, that it is!"

She was a fat woman as well as tall, with a flat, flabby face, surmounted by a rusty crape bonnet, and she carried a bloated umbrella and a reticule gorged to repletion.

Mr. Yabsley gazed up at her as he might have done at the dome of St. Paul's, while his circulation seemed to come to a deadlock and the color fade out of his necktie.

"'Suitable for small tradesmen,'" he murmured.

The face smiled a sea-serpent-like smile that appeared to swallow up all its other features. Then, as though resolved to beat about the bush no longer :

"You wants a wife, don't you?"

The effect of this bombshell was to cause the tobacconist to drop the shutter like a hot potato, and make one dive for freedom under the counter.

He came up dusty but desperate.

"No," he cried, shaking his head violently, "no, certainly not."

"Oh, yes, you do," with unimpaired cheerfulness, "you wants a wife, a nice, sensible wife, one what's been married before, and who'll know how to make you comfortable."

Then, dropping umbrella and reticule, she clasped both hands, and gazing affectionately round at the stock in trade, exclaimed:

"And how comfortable I could make you, there's no telling!"

"I don't want to be made comfortable," disclaimed Mr. Yabsley eagerly.

"Oh, yes, you do, ducky."

Ducky! That he should have led a respectable, sober, law-abiding existence for five-and-fifty years only to be saluted as "ducky" at the end of it!

"My name," he began, righteous indignation momentarily overcoming craven fear, "my name is——"

"T. Yabsley," interrupted his charmer, bending over the counter and laying out a box of wax vestas as flat as a pancake with her elbow. "And what does T. stand for? Thomas, or Titus, or Theodore, or Tobias, or what?"

"Tubal Cain," murmured Mr. Yabsley wildly.

"And a very nice name, too. You've never asked me mine."

This with a skittishness that made the lids of the tobacco jars rattle.

"It's Susan, Susan Bundle, though not for long, I hope—meaning the last—but you can call me Susy, if you like," making a playful dab at him across the counter with the bloated umbrella.

Mr. Yabsley dodged the umbrella, and she only succeeded in smashing a clay pipe.

"It's a mercy she's the size she is," he thought. "She'd stick tight if she tried to get at me round the counter."

"You can call me Susy and I can call you——"

"Tiglath Pileser," muttered the tobacconist, with a sudden upheaval of old, crusted, Sunday-school memories.

"My favorite name," cried Mrs. Bundle, ecstatically. "So Tiggy, dear, we'll look on it as settled."

"Woman!" exclaimed Mr. Yabsley, fired with a sudden resolution, "what do you mean, and who do you take me for?"

"T. Yabsley," with a smirk.

"But I ain't. Nothing of the sort," he shouted.

The smirk trailed off at one side of the mouth, only to reappear at the opposite corner.

"Get along with you," with lumbering playfulness. "As though I didn't know better. Ain't there the name T. Yabsley over the door? And who else are you if you ain't him? You're

a bad, bad man, that you are, to try and deceive a poor, lone, lorn widder."

"That's the name, right enough," explained Mr. Yabsley. "But he's gone away."

The flabby countenance became a trifle elongated.

"Gone away—and when's he expected back?"

"Never."

The last traces of the smirk melted away, and the jaw dropped.

"Never," she repeated after him. "Then I should like to know who's going to pay me my railway fare? One and three-pence, Parliamentary, it were, and——"

A sudden lifting of the cloud from the doughy features showed that she had hit upon the weak point in the defense.

"But how about the letter as was wrote to Mrs. Wilkins only yesterday, asking——"

"Yes, yes, I know," interrupted the tobacconist hastily. "The fact is he changed his mind sudden—had a letter—left me to mind the business—said I wasn't to expect him till I see him, which would be never, and if any one called I was to say as his movements was a bit uncertain, in consequence of there being so many railway accidents lately."

All this poured out with great glibness and without a stop, as the speaker, having once quitted the narrow, uphill path of veracity, found himself almost rolling down the opposite declivity.

Mrs. Bundle regarded him with a vacant stare.

"What's his address!" she demanded.

"Well, I'm sorry to say I forget the number, but I fancy New Zealand would find him."

Blank bewilderment on the part of the enemy, followed, however, by the question:

"What's he gone there for?"

"Benefit of his health," answered Mr. Yabsley, ignoring all previous explanations. "Didn't I say so before? Doctor ordered sea voyage—said it was his only chance."

"When'd he go?"

"Last train last night—I mean first train this morning."

"I s'pose there's no chance of catching him up?"

"I'm—I'm afraid not," admitted Mr. Yabsley, shaking his head regretfully. "You see, he was going to take the express and travel right through without stopping."

Here the deceiver wiped the sweat of falsehood from his brow, while the deceived, suddenly giving way, sat down with a thud that almost made the cane-bottomed chair give way too—"And it was only re-seated the other day," was its owner's rueful comment—and burst into tears.

"His only chance, indeed"—referring to the tobacconist's last lie but two. "My only chance, you mean. Oh, I've been deceived cruel!"

The other person present was too painfully conscious of the incontrovertibility of this latter statement to do more than shake his head sympathetically.

"Why in the world don't she go?" muttered Mr. Yabsley under his breath. "Ain't I told enough lies to satisfy any reasonable woman?"

A sudden awful thought assailed him. That boy! He had quite escaped his master's memory during the last terrible quarter of an hour. At any moment he was liable to turn up and blast the fair structure of mendacity that had taken so much pains to rear. Something must be done, and that speedily. By fair means or foul the premises must be cleared, and, having none of the former at his command, Mr. Yabsley once more had resort to the basest duplicity.

"I've been turning it over in my mind," he commenced, leaning confidentially over the counter, "and—well, I don't know, but it seems to me that there's just a chance you might catch him after all, if you was to be quick about it."

Pausing to note the effect of the bait, he was encouraged on his downward course by the fact that though the disconsolate one's tears did not immediately cease to flow, yet it was evident that she was now sobbing with one ear open.

"You see," he continued, "he'd got to catch the express at Cowslip, and I says to him at the time as he'd got all his work cut out to do it."

The sobs had ceased, and it was plain that the victim was hanging upon his words.

"If only that boy don't turn up and no customer don't come to give me away, it'll be all right," was his inmost thought. "Now," holding up an impressive forefinger, "s'pose, betwixt you and me, as he misses that train, which there's many things unlikelier. There mayn't be another for hours, and he'd just have to hang about the station until——"

There was no occasion to complete the sentence. Giving her

face a hasty and final polish with the corner of her shawl, she made as though to throw her arms round the tobacconist's neck.

"Bless you," she cried, "you dear, kind soul! Bless you for those words!"

Mr. Yabsley dodged the embrace as he had the umbrella previously.

"Now, don't you lose a minnit," he urged. "And mind, he's a tall man with a bald head, and a brown overcoat with a velvet collar, and a cast in his eye."

Mrs. Bundle collected her belongings, and was half-way to the door before the words were out of his mouth.

"Don't forget the velvet collar," cried the tobacconist, following her to the door, "and it's his left eye."

"Oh, I'll remember right enough, and, what's more, I'll never forget what you've done for me, never."

"Don't mention it," said Mr. Yabsley. "I'd have done as much for anybody. Don't you waste another second. Good-morning, and—— She's gone, she's really gone at last. Yah!" apostrophizing the back of the moving mass, "call you Susy, indeed, you—you boa constrictor! I should just like to hear myself."

It receded farther and farther, finally it turned the corner and disappeared like a vast black blot from T. Yabsley's mental horizon.

"Bless me, what a morning it's been!" he exclaimed. Then, looking up at the name over the door: "When I think of the lies I've reeled off by the yard, it do seem as though it ought to be Ananias 'stead of Timothy."

Whereupon, his mind reverting to the subject of the still partially closed shutters:

"Drat that boy!" forgetting with what leniency, not to say gratitude, he had regarded his absence so very recently, "I'll dust his jacket for him when he does take upon himself to turn up. I've a good mind to——"

All this time he had been gazing one way—that was up the street; now he turned to look down the street.

"I've a good mind to give him——"

Heavens! What was that? Three figures were approaching from that direction. One—masculine, juvenile, and corduroy clad with regard to the lower limbs—was easily recognized by his master. He was strolling along at an easy pace, engag-

ing, as he came, in light and agreeable converse with two sable-clad female figures that walked on either side of him.

Mr. Yabsley's jaw dropped and his knees seemed to give way under him. Even had there been time, he lacked the capacity for flight.

"That's him," he heard the boy exclaim. "That's T. Yabsley—which T. stands for Timothy—as you was asking for. I'm afeared I'm a bit behindhand this morning," he went on, addressing his master; "but I've been a-drowning of some kittens. They belonged to our cat. There was six on them, and I drowned 'em one at a time. It was prime!"

The lust of slaughter glittered in his eye, and he was proceeding to details, when a prod from one of his gentle escort recalled him to a sense of matters of less moment.

"I heared these yer ladies inquiring for you down street, and offered to show 'em the way."

Something in the tobacconist's speechless glare made him quail.

"I guess I'll be taking them there shutters down," he remarked, sheering off and leaving the hapless T. Yabsley to his double fate.

Of the two fresh specimens of the opposite sex which now confronted him, one was tall, bony, and angular; the other was short, broad, and a trifle less aggressive-looking. Both wore deep black, and each showed a widow's cap inside her bonnet. Having looked him well over from head to foot, the tall, bony woman opened her mouth and observed:

"Mrs. Smallchick."

Whereupon the short, stout one, following suit, remarked:

"And Mrs. Longclose."

Mr. Yabsley, vaguely comprehending that this was introductory, stared from one to the other and murmured the formula:

"'Suitable for small tradesmen.'"

"Jest so," assented number one, briefly.

"P'raps we'd better walk inside," proposed number two.

So Mrs. Smallchick led the way, and Mrs. Longclose brought up the rear; the tobacconist being in the middle, in which position he only seemed to lack handcuffs to present the appearance of a condemned malefactor.

Having pinned him up against his own counter, they both opened fire at once.

"Me and Mrs. Smallchick——" began the short woman.

"Mrs. Longclose and me——" began the tall one.

Pausing simultaneously, they proceeded to indulge in mutual recriminations.

"You never will let me get a word in edgeways," was the former's accusation.

"You're always a-interrupting of me," was the companion comment.

"Well, I like that," from the one.

"Well, of all the untruthfulness," from the other.

"But there, I might have guessed."

"But there, I knowed how 'twould be."

There was an interval of a second or two, at the end of which they made another attack upon their victim.

"You wants a widder?" said Mrs. Smallchick.

"Which is to say a wife?" insinuated Mrs. Longclose.

"It's the same thing," snapped the former.

"Not at all," contradicted the latter.

"What was Mrs. Wilkins's own words? 'Here's a widder wanted immejit, which, as you and Mrs. Longclose is both widders by marriage——'"

"Mrs. Wilkins, she says to me, she says, 'Here's a gent's seen my advertisement, and 's written to me for a wife, and seeing as you and Mrs. Smallchick is both on my books, to say nothink of living next door to each other; if I was you,' she says, 'I'd go over first thing to-morrer morning, as the situashun might suit one or t'other, if not——'"

"'Which I've every respeck for you, Mrs. Smallchick,' she says, 'and I think it 'd suit you to a T—that being the inishull of his Christian name, and——'"

"'Mrs. Longclose, ma'am,' she says, speaking low and confidential, 'never have I seen the finger of Providence pinting straighter than I see it pinting to you at this minnit. Mrs. Longclose, ma'am,' she says, 'I names no names, and I makes no illusions, but if ever there was anybody cut out by nature's own hand for the situashun, you are that person.'"

"When I was a gell," remarked Mrs. Smallchick, "pinting wasn't considered manners, and as to cutting out, strikes me nature couldn't have had much of a pattern to go by, or p'raps the scissors was blunt."

"Some folks," was the retort, "do seem to have been cut on the cross to that extent, as act straightforward they can't."

Here Mrs. Smallchick looked at Mrs. Longclose and snorted, and Mrs. Longclose looked at Mrs. Smallchick and smiled.

Meanwhile, the bone of contention had passively submitted to being wrangled over, which, considering the way he was hemmed in, was the only course of conduct open to him. And yet it seemed as though he ought to have some voice in the matter, though, up to the present, neither of the ladies had allowed him an opportunity of exercising it.

"Goodness only knows how they'll settle it between 'em," he thought. "Anyhow, they can't both have me."

By this time the shutters were down, but observation having shown the boy that his master's attention was too well occupied in minding his own affairs to be cognizant of the proceedings of his subordinate, the latter had strolled off, and was now agreeably employed in conveying a vivid impression of the kitten episode to a congenial spirit.

Within the shop there was a momentary lull while the competitors recovered their breath.

Mr. Yabsley took advantage of the same to make an effort to review the situation. Would it—could it be possible, by reverting to strategy, to escape from this second position of peril, in spite of the odds being so much against him?

But before he could do more than grasp the merest outline of a scheme, the onslaught was renewed.

"I'm sure the business seems to be all as I could wish," remarked Mrs. Smallchick, casting a critical eye around, "though I will say I prefer a corner shop as a rule."

"What I should call snug," observed Mrs. Longclose, looking about her with a proprietary air, "though p'raps not kep' jest as I should wish to see it. But then, what could you expect with no one to see after things?"

Here Mr. Yabsley was goaded into a primary but unsuccessful attempt at self-assertion.

"I don't know——" he began.

"Of course you don't, you poor dear man," interrupted Mrs. Longclose.

"No, indeed, it ain't likely for a minnit," interpolated Mrs. Smallchick.

"That's what we've come about, sent direck by Providence."

"By Mrs. Wilkins, and strongly recommended, which she's less likely to be took in than the other party."

"Mrs. Smallchick, ma'am, this is past bearing!"

"Then don't you bear it a minnit longer'n you're obliged, Mrs. Longclose, ma'am. There's the door handy."

"Which is just what you'd like, I've no doubt, Mrs. Smallchick, but I'm not sich a fool as I look."

"Looks is mostly deceitful, Mrs. Longclose, as I'm well aware."

"Really, ladies, really," the tobacconist's voice was raised in expostulation. "Don't let us have any unpleasantness, pray don't. I assure you, I'm not worth it."

"I never said you was," replied Mrs. Smallchick, "but so long as the business is all right——"

"Of course, there's no denying the business is the first consideration," interrupted Mrs. Longclose.

"The fact is," went on Mr. Yabsley, running his hands through his hair distractedly, "what with one thing and another, I hardly seem to know what I'm doing. It isn't only the rates and taxes overdue, or being two quarters behind with the rent, or the bill of sale on the furniture. I might manage to get over that in time. But to think I should live to see myself bankrupt——"

"Bankrup'!" was the double exclamation. "Why, you never mean it?"

Mr. Yabsley shook his head dolefully.

"Twopence three farthings in the pound, if that," he added, with a groan, which it is to be hoped was one of contrition.

But there was a glimmer of suspicion in Mrs. Smallchick's eye.

"Why, the business looks all right, and you keeps a boy?"

"A boy? Ah!" from the boy's master, "that's where it is. I'm obliged to keep him. If I was to give him notice, I'd have to pay him his wages. It's cheaper to keep him on and owe 'em to him."

"Why, you old ruffy'un!"

"Bringing us over here on a wild-goose chase!"

"You ought to be horsewhipped, that you did!"

"You go answering advertisements, indeed! I should like to know what you mean by it!"

"A perfeck man-trap, that's what you are, a-laying snares for the widder and the orphan."

"The truth is," explained the culprit, feebly, "the truth is, I thought I might meet with some one with a bit of money, that'd set me on my legs again."

"Set you on your legs! I feel a deal more like knocking you off 'm altogether. Mrs. Longclose, ma'am, we've been deceived shameful!"

"Mrs. Smallchick, ma'am, I couldn't have put it better myself."

"I'm only a weak woman," exclaimed Mrs. Smallchick, towering a head and shoulders above the cowering Yabsley, "but when I think how I've been took in, I declare I could shake you till your teeth rattled in your head."

"Don't do that, ma'am, pray," he implored, "for they don't fit too well at the best of times. Think," and he groaned louder than before, "think of the escape you've had."

"He's right there," put in Mrs. Longclose, "oh, we've had a escape, a narrer escape. Think of our hard-earned savings as he'd have swallowed up."

"Swaller," cried Mrs. Smallchick, "he'd swaller anythink, that man. But there, if I stop another minnit I shall be doing him a injury. Let's leave him to his deserts, and rub the dust off our shoes on the doormat as Scripter says."

With a final shower of vituperative epithets, they gradually departed. Mrs. Smallchick came back once to put her head in at the door, and salute him as a "disrepppytable old cockroach," but Mr. Yabsley, being by this time, as it were, morally waterproofed, merely groaned deprecatingly.

"I reckon I could hardly have told more lies to the square inch if I'd been putting up for Parlyment," he lamented some five minutes later. "It's perfectly awful how easy it seemed to come to me once I'd got my tongue in. They jest slipped off it like it was greased."

He tottered to the door, and looked out.

It was a fine spring morning, and the village street was wearing its most picturesque aspect; but to the tobacconist's jaundiced eye the world was black and blighted with widows. The sky might be blue and flecked with clouds like the fleeciast Shetland wool, the leaves might wear their tenderest green, the tiled roofs blush their reddest and the windows wink roguishly in the sun; they winked in vain at T. Yabsley, who, after carefully reconnoitring, ventured to raise his voice sufficiently to summon the boy.

"Thomas," he said, "jest come and mind the shop. I'm fagged out. And, Thomas, seeing it's Saturday, you can put up the shutters early, and take a half-holiday. And, Thomas, if

any one calls and wants to see me—any lady, you know—specially any one in mourning, say I've gone away for a few days."

The boy nodded, and his master vanished into his den, only to reappear in a few seconds.

"Thomas, here's your wages and twopence over, and if you like to say I've been a little queer in my head lately, why, I'd look over it for once."

Thomas nodded again, and grinned delightedly.

"You lemme lone, I'll skeer 'em proper."

Mr. Yabsley was a little taken back at the promptness with which his assistant prepared to carry out his hint.

"Don't—don't overdo it, Thomas," he entreated. "At least—that is—only if you find they won't go peaceable. My gracious! Who's that?"

It was only a customer for an ounce of shag, but Mr. Yabsley bolted into his retreat as though it had been a rabbit-hole, and he its legal tenant.

"If this sort of thing is going to last much longer, Jacob," he remarked to the cat, "you'll be advertising for a situation next, for I believe another day would about finish me. Why! bless me! I never thought of that. I'll write directly to that woman Wilkins, and get her to cut 'em off at the main."

So seizing pen and paper he sat down, and hastily scrawled the following lines:

"T. Yabsley's compliments, and please not to send any more widows. P.S.—I've changed my mind."

To Mr. Yabsley's unspeakable relief, and Thomas's bitter chagrin, no more ladies in black appeared upon the scene before closing time; whereupon the latter, having put up the shutters and bolted his dinner—his master following suit by bolting the shop door after him—departed in joyful haste.

"Thomas," were the tobacconist's parting words, "whatever you do, don't forget to post that letter, and mind you're here to your time on Monday."

The first part of the afternoon passed quietly enough, and after a while Mr. Yabsley left off starting at the sound of approaching footsteps, and was actually beginning to read the paper with some degree of interest, when the clock, striking the half-hour, reminded him that it was time to put the kettle on for tea.

Having done so, he was about to resume his seat, when—a

tap, light but distinct, at the outer door seemed to curdle all the blood in his body.

Jacob heard it, too, and turned one ear inquiringly in that direction.

"It's another of 'em," groaned the tobacconist. "Well, anyhow, I needn't let on to hear."

It came again.

"Tap away," he exclaimed, viciously. "I ain't going to let you in, not if you tap ever so."

Tap—tap—tap. Something in the steady, monotonous persistency of the sound made the cold perspiration break out upon his forehead.

Tap—tap—tap.

"This is awful. I ain't a woodpecker, nor yet a holler beech-tree, but if this is going to keep on there's no knowing whether I mightn't fancy I was either or both."

He looked at Jacob for inspiration, and Jacob looked at him, as much as to say: "Why don't you see who it is? It might be the milk or the cat's-meat."

Tap—tap—tap.

"Perhaps I'd better open the door half an inch or so, and say I'm out, and no knowing when I'll be back, or she'll be rousing the whole street."

Tip-toeing across the floor, he proceeded, with infinite precaution—and his heart in his mouth—to open the door the least crack in the world.

"Not at home," he cried tremulously through the aperture, and was about to slam and rebolt it when the words, "Lor, Mr. Yabsley, sir," in a familiar and expostulatory voice, caused him to reconsider his intention—his heart at the same time resuming its normal position with a flop of relief.

"Why, Mrs. Wardle, if I hadn't clean forgot all about you."

It was the woman, previously referred to, who "washed and ironed" him, and generally came in on a Saturday afternoon to tidy him up for Sunday.

"I dunno what's come to my head," he added, opening the door just wide enough for her to squeeze through; "seems like as though it'd been overwound." Then with an air of affected indifference: "I s'pose you didn't happen to see any one hanging about outside?"

But Mrs. Wardle hadn't noticed nobody.

Next day was Sunday. Mr. Yabsley was a little doubtful as

to the safety of church-going; but finally decided to risk it, and would have enjoyed the service but for the unusual attentiveness and urbanity of the pew-opener, who twice came to ask whether he felt any draught from the ventilator, and generally smiled upon him in a way that caused him to recollect, with a nervous shudder, that though she was a pew-opener by profession, she was a widow in private life.

Was it possible that she had any inkling of what had happened? Mr. Yabsley chewed the cud of this reflection during sermon-time, and very unpalatable he found it.

Monday morning came. The boy was astonishingly punctual, being half an hour late to the minute.

About eleven o'clock Mr. Yabsley, who was dusting some of the articles in the window, was aware of a sort of eclipse, as though some dark, opaque body had intervened between him and the sun. Looking up, he was almost paralyzed at the sight of a female in black, with her nose pressed against the glass, attentively regarding him. As soon as she caught his eye she smiled and nodded.

The tobacconist's jaw dropped, and there was a wild, hunted look about him that might have moved a heart of stone; but it had no effect upon the lady outside beyond moving her from the window to the door. Entering the shop, she was just in time to catch sight of her prey disappearing through the opposite door, which he secured behind him and then sat down to think.

At first he ransacked his brain hopelessly; the woman meanwhile, rapping impatiently on the counter.

Then a means of escape, so simple that he was amazed it had never suggested itself, rose up before his mind.

"Why not say I'm suited?"

At the same moment there came a tap at the door.

"Who's there?" demanded Mr. Yabsley.

"Please, sir, it's me," was the answer in the tones of Thomas.

He was a lanky, growing boy, and it is surprising what a narrow space he managed to squeeze through.

"There's a lady wants to see yer most pertickler," he remarked with a backward motion of the thumb. "Come on approval, that's what she says, and I wants to know whether I'm to skeer her off or what?"

"Thomas," said his master, "of course you posted that letter on Saturday?"

"Oh, lawk!"

The delinquent fumbled for a moment in his trouser pocket, prior to producing the letter in an extremely dirty and much crumpled condition, with a piece of toffee still adhering to it.

"I been and clean forgot all about it."

"Thomas," with the calmness of despair, "you've been the ruin of me, I shouldn't wonder. However, you can tell the lady I'm much obliged, but I'm suited."

Thomas went accordingly, and Mr. Yabsley awaited the result with his ear to the keyhole. He heard the sound of voices, one rather high and shrill, with an accent of determination that boded ill. Then Thomas's knuckles applied for re-admission, and he was allowed to enter with the same precautions as before.

"Well," anxiously, "what did she say?"

"She says you may be suited, but she ain't, and she insists on a pussonal intervoo."

"Oh, she does, does she. Very well then, Thomas, you can look after the shop. I'm going to bed."

All the rest of the morning there were constant bulletins passing between the shop and the chamber over it.

"Ain't she gone yet, Thomas?" Mr. Yabsley raised his head from the pillow to inquire for about the ninth time.

"Not her, and what's more I come to tell yer as there's a couple more come by carrier's cart. I told 'em as you was in bed, but they said as they reckoned they'd wait till you got up."

"Thomas," cried the tobacconist, "I've been a good master to you, haven't I?"

"I don't say you ain't."

"Very well then; go downstairs and tell 'em not to be alarmed, but you don't like the looks of me, and, judging by the spots, you're afraid it's either measles or small-pock. Anyhow, say I'll be down direckly, and I hope they won't think of going without seeing me."

A few minutes later the sound of the shop-door banging violently was followed by that of retreating footsteps and gradually receding voices.

The boy came grinning to report that the charm had worked.

"Thomas," said the tobacconist, sinking back exhausted, "you can put up the shutters, and if any one else comes say I'm dead."

At the end of half an hour or so another tap at the door

roused him from the state of semi-unconsciousness into which he was sinking.

"That you back again, Thomas? Whatever's up now!"

"It isn't Thomas, it's me, Mrs. Wardle, come to see if I couldn't do anything for you, and I've brought a little beef tea."

The beef tea was good. Mr. Yabsley sat up and disposed of it with relish. After which Mrs. Wardle rearranged his pillows and tidied up.

She was a comfortable, natty little woman, hardworking, too, and honest as the day, with a brisk sort of way about her that did you good. It did Mr. Yabsley good.

Having put everything straight and drawn down the blind, she was about to take her departure, when a sudden exclamation made her start.

"Lor, Mr. Yabsley, sir, are you took worse? Shall I run for the doctor? Is it in your back, or legs, or where?"

"I'm not worse, I'm better, a lot. It was jest a sudden—— Mrs. Wardle, I declare I never thought of it before, but you're a widdier, ain't you?"

"Well, sir, you ought to know by this time, seeing I've been one this ten year and more."

"Mrs. Wardle," propping himself on one elbow, "there's been a lot of women about the place to-day wanting me to marry 'em. I've managed to get rid of 'em for the present, but there's no saying when they'll be back again and carrying on worse'n ever. Mrs. Wardle, there's one way of getting even with 'em as I can see. You've washed and mended and generally done for me for some years. S'pose you was to marry me and do for me altogether?"

"Mis—ter Yabsley! I declare I never did! I'm that took aback as never was!"

"You know my ways," continued the ardent wooer, "and you'n Jacob have always got on well together. Somehow, it's jest struck me as I might do worse, and, anyhow, you'd be able to keep off them other harpies. And, Mrs. Wardle, the bands might be put up next Sunday, if convenient."

"Well, Mr. Yabsley, sir, though I should no more have dreamed of such a thing! Still, I don't know but what——"

"Then that's settled, and I'm very glad I happened to think of it. You can tell Thomas to take down the shutters, and if anyone else should apply for the situation, you can say the vacancy's filled up."

THE PASSING OF THE SHIP *

BY LUCILE LOVELL

Author of "Not of Annapolis," etc.



THE sloop-of-war *Mooseilauke* stood off Gonave.

The sun's gold disk had disappeared and the sweet melancholy of a southern twilight lay upon the island, whose profile, darkly outlined against the saffron-hued sky, was set in an amethyst frame, the deep and luminous violet of the sea. Briefly, the tropic twilight is short; its *silhouette* hung there between the two immensities of sky and sea, then the jewel colors of wave and cloud and wood-draped island vanished—a velvety blackness covered all. One by one the stars appeared, not in their midnight glory, but tremulous tiny points, dim as rushlights swept by the wind.

On the island the trees were alight with fireflies; these, too, flickered faintly as though uncertain of their power to shine. In the half light the great ship's sails, purpled by shadows, took fantastic shapes, but very soon the moon leaned out of a cloud and cleared up the mystery. The sky overflowed with light, a silver ship sailed a silver sea. Twilight's dusky veil had been drawn aside by the fingers of night.

On the spar-deck of the *Mooseilauke*, seamen Bill Williams and Sam Woods, apprentice Stubbs and the Jack of the Dust were matching experiences. Moved, it may be, by the mysterious influence of moonlight, these men of discipline spoke freely of love—a naval Decameron might have been taken down from their lips. The boatswain's mate listened, without commenting. Old Slater commented, without listening. From time to time he left his messmates, to lean over the rail. Fixing his eyes on Gonave with that interest which we give to something which

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marks an event in our lives, he wagged his head so knowingly that Stubbs and Dusty—men of one poem, so to speak—were visibly envious. At length the old seaman took his place among them. He began at once to speak:

“Hev I ever tol’ ye of ’n adventure me an’ the Exec’tive hed on thet ther’ islan’?”

“Give us the first line, Mr. Slater, and we’ll tell you,” replied the Jack of the Dust, jauntily.

“Ketch a-hol’ o’ yerself, Dusty,” recommended old Slater. “Et ain’t no comic piece. Et’s ’bout a gal. A little bit of er gal—yaller’s gol’.”

The Jack of the Dust’s expression changed; he had but just begun the study of the “eternal feminine,” and his desire for phenomena was still unsatisfied.

“Fire away,” he said, cordially. “I guess it’s a good one this time.”

“Do you mean the *Mooselauke’s* First Luff?” questioned Stubbs.

“Ther same,” old Slater replied.

“That porpoise!” exclaimed the Jack of the Dust.

“He wuzn’t no porpoise then, lad,” said the story-teller. “They called ’im ther ‘Dandy Ensign’—he wuz Ensign Fitz in them days—an’ ‘Gentleman Jack’ an’ ‘Han’some Jack,’ an’ he wuz purty near all thet, fer he wuz clear pink ’n’ white; he hedn’t no airs, an’ he wuz plucky as the nex’ one. I couldn’t never ’count fer ’im.” Old Slater lowered his voice. “I couldn’t ’count fer ’im in enny way, ’xcept thet ther Lord had a han’ at ’im ’fore they ketched ’im at Annapolis. I ain’t sayin’ but what he wuz onreliable’s they make ’em ennywhere, but me an’ ’im wuz great frien’s—better ’n we be *now*, fer Time he’s took offen me an’ put on ter him. Me an’ him hed been on ther *Bender* two year, an’ one cruise in these ere waters the skipper—no sailor-man ’t all he wuzn’t—took et inter his blame ol’ head ter come up here from Port o’ Prince, whar we wuz havin’ more fun than ’nuff, fer gun practice. No matter ’bout what we done. Though I rec’lec’ our Divis’n Cap’n got ’n eye blowed out, an’ seed more ’n ever after thet, et havin’ quick’ned his ’magination. One mornin’ Fitz he come ter me an’ sez, ‘I’ve got ter get out er this.’

“‘I’m goin’ ’shore shootin’,’ sez he. ‘Git leave an’ come ’long, Slater; mebbe we’ll strike sumthin’.’

“I knowed he wanted me ter pull the boat, so I got leave an’

we went 'shore an' shot wil' roun' thar erwhile, then he got nuff an' propos'd er bite of the rations I'd fetched. I set 'em out under a big coco-palm, an' Fitzy he got confidential over mess and begun ter talk 'bout the Creole gal he'd got 'quainted with in Port o' Prince."

"What was she like, Mr. Slater?" inquired the Jack of the Dust, eagerly.

"Like 'em all," Old Slater replied, grimly. "But thet ain't nuther here nor thar. As I wuz a-sayin', Fitz he sed he loved 'er 'madly,' an' a lot more that I knowed by heart, fer he loved easy an' of'en in them days, an' swore he'd make 'er Missis Fitz ef he had ter give up his fambly—his mother havin' given 'im warnin' thet she wouldn't hev no furrin graft on ter the Fitz tree. While he wuz a-ravin' we hearn sumthin' an' looked roun'. Thar she stood!"

"The Creole?" interrupted the Jack of the Dust.

"No; the yaller gal," Old Slater answered, "lookin' like er leetle gol' statyure in er garden, with all ther green stuff back on her. She was jes so slim an' still. I reck'n she wuz 'bout twel' year ol'."

"A kid!" exclaimed the Jack of the Dust.

"Don't ye go a-jumpin', Dusty," said Old Slater. "She wuz out er the nus'ry."

"They ripen early in these ere lat'tudes, Dusty. They don't hev nuthin' ter keep 'em back, which ever edication will an' too many strings roun' ther wais'," Bill Williams remarked, with the air of a reformer.

"An' they *ripen*—all roun'. They don't stay green on one side till they're thirty an' then dry up," growled Sam Woods.

Bill Williams nodded understandingly. "Thet's New Englan', Sammy," said he.

"But the little golden girl?" ventured Stubbs.

Old Slater continued:

"Fitz jumped up when he see her an' motions fer ter come an' hev a bite, an' long she steps, easy 'n' light 's a kitten, an' ~~se~~ down side o' him. She couldn't never hev seed no sech rations, but she wuzn't took back. She eat 's nat'ral 's a bird picks up crumbs. Thet, my lads," with a glance at the Apprentice and the Jack of the Dust, "thet wuz 'cause she wuz thurere-bred—they shows their grain fust off. Don't fergit thet when ye're lookin' fer somethin' ter 'dorn yer homes."

"I ain't looking for *savages*," returned the Jack of the Dust.

"I like a woman with some style; that has seen something of the world and knows her way about better than to mess with two strange men in the jungle."

"Dusty, he wants some Arybeller, with a book o' et'quet' under 'er arm an' a par'solet over 'er head," drawled Bill Williams.

"Thet ain't fur from New Englan'," muttered Sam Woods.

"Le' me tell ye, Dusty," said Old Slater, gravely, "a gal's got ter be equil ter the occasion, whether ye find 'er in ther jungle or on ther Bow'ry. Ef she hain't got ther knack fer *thet* she ain't got nothin' ter build on."

"I ain't asking anybody for points!" blazed the Jack of the Dust.

"Hush up!" said Stubbs.

Silence being assured, the old seaman resumed his narrative:

"Fitz he begun ter talk ter her in Creole. Et hit ther mark, but she hedn't much ter say; she'd never seed nuthin' like 'im, an' wuz all carried 'way with 'is pink 'n' white. So thar she sot, her great, big black eyes full o' witch-looks a-listenin' to 'is talk, an' answerin' up sof' 's er leetle bird peeps, when he asked her sumthin' d'rect. 'Twuz plain nuff ter me thet she wuz clean gone on 'im so *I* went ter sleep—thar ain't no bigger blunder, Dusty, than fer er man ter keep 'wake when thar ain't gals nuff ter go roun'; he ain't goin' ter be pop'lar in any s'ciety ef he makes *thet* slip."

"Much obliged, but I've got way ahead of a-b ab," the Jack of the Dust said, with fine irony.

Old Slater continued, calmly:

"When I woke up they wuz out o' sight o' land—Mimi, thet wuz her name, wuz a-callin' of Fitz '*Doudoux*' ev'ry other word, an' he wuz burstin' with pride an' vanity."

"They don' set up prim in these ere parts an' freeze er man's words on ter his lips," Sam Woods said, pensively.

"Wall, I wuz equil to et!" said Old Slater, without noticing this interruption. "I hedn't ben ten year on ther flagship fer nuthin'. I hed dyplom'cy 'nuff fer 'n adm'ral, an' kep' my eyes a-rovin', an' listened to Fitz makin' of himself out ther hero o' combats he'd never ben in, without blinkin'. But when ther bats began ter sweep roun' over'ead in er percession, I knowed 'nuff ter know we b'longed on ther *Bender*, an' I calls Fitz down an' gits a move on 'im. Mimi she wa'n't fer sayin' good-by, an' she trots 'long with us ter ther shore, an' when he sed he'd love 'er alwus, an' promised ter come the nex' day an' stay forever,

she let 'im git inter ther gig. She stood thar, a-watchin' after 'im. I kin see 'er yit! Leetle slim gal, her blue cotton gownd, belayed at ther wais' with er green an yaller string, half coverin' of 'er, a-callin' '*Adieu, Doudoux, adieu!*' in a voice sof' 's velvit—jes' ther sperit o' the islan'! 'Slater,' sez Fitz, when we wuz clear o' moorin's, 'et's a great ol' world!' Then he waits erwhile an' sez—he wuz smilin' free, like a lad—'Why, thet leetle gal 's ther light o' my life!'"

"What about the Creole lady?" questioned the Jack of the Dust. "Your 'Dandy Ensign' didn't need transfer papers for his affections, did he?"

"I entered right inter et," continued Old Slater, slightly raising his voice. "An' I let 'im say the same thing a hundred diff'rent ways till we wuz 'longside the *Bender*, then sez he: 'I'll see 'er ter-morrer, Slater!'"

"But we didn't get off so easy. Ther skipper hed ther dyspepsy the nex' day, thar wuzn't no liberty fer ennybody an' he wuz sorry he couldn't stop the sun from shinin'. He kep' this up fer his 'musement till ther end o' ther week. Fitz, he wuz blame near crazy an' I sez: 'Try 'em on goin' 'shore fer butterflies.'"

"Et went, fer he wuz knowed ter be a great etymol'gist in them days, an' we got off. Then, Fitz', he took et outen me! 'He wuz goin' ter marry thet leetle gal ef he had ter quit ther service an' live under a cabbage-palm ther rest o' his life. She wuz wuth et!' He named er king thet married whar he wanted ter an' wuzn't never sorry—but he didn't mention no ev'ry-day man thet had the same run o' luck. He sed she wuz er match fer enny Duchess—an' I reck'n twuz so, ther only Duchess I ever see bein' yaller 's er saffron bag, an' ol' at thet. Yes, she wuz ther mos' perfec' leetle gal in ther worl', an' he wuz goin' ter hev 'er an' prej'dice might go ter thunder. 'I tell ye what, Slater,' ses he, 'I'll give out she's er princess; they'll knuckle ter *thet*.'"

"I wuz so dead set 'ginst thet Creole an' 'er airs thet I 'greed with 'im. 'Thet's so,' sez I. 'Ther gal's got ther royal grain, an' no mistake.'"

"Wal, Mimi she wuz on ther shore, an' when he see her he wuz up on 'is feet. 'Don't git ter sleep, Slater!' sez he. 'She's waitin', man, can't ye see!' He wuz out 'fore ther gig wuz in, an' when I made things fas' I follered on. They wuz in ther same place under ther coco-palm, an' Mimi wuz restin' 'ginst Fitz 's light 's er slip o' willer—I ain't ever see ennything ter

equil ther grace o' them leetle slim niggers; runnin' water ain't smoother nor purtier 'n their ways o' movin' an, jist surroundin' ther man they love——"

Sam Woods interrupted: "They don't tie up their feelin's an' make er man feel like he wuz er fool when he lets go o' his'n, an' hedn't never see er woman 'fore."

Old Slater laughed. "I'll give ye ther deck *now*, Sammy, ef ye say so," said he.

"Go 'head," growled Sam Woods.

"Wall, I lef' Fitz an' Mimi an' struck out fer butterflies; after erwhile I ketched er big black feller, an' thet wuz all I wanted fer er blin', one bein' as misleadin' 's er dozen, an' 'nuff sight easier ter ketch. Then I started back to ther 'rig'nal spot an' I'd better never hev lef' et. Thar sot them two, Mimi makin' no 'bjection ter Fitz's arm snug roun' her wais', an' a-wrigglin' towards 'em, on ther ends o' his toes, wuz as ugly-favored er knave as I ever see. They wuz sittin' with their backs to him an' me, an' in er flash I knowed he didn't like what he see; thet he wuz Mimi's comp'ny—fathers 'n' brothers ain't interferin' in love 'fairs in these parts—an' thet somebuddy 'd got ter pay fer 'is losin' of 'er. I give er jump for'ard an' sung out. Fitz an' Mimi sprung up an' faced roun'. Then he turned an' see me an' knowed he wuzn't goin' ter stand enny show with us two men. I wuz near parlyzed by ther look on 'is face, but 'twuzn't ennythin' ter Mimi's—hate, sech as white wimmien don't feel, wuz ragin' an' blazin' thar. Et told 'im, better 'n words, thet he'd los' his grip on 'er, an' ther nigger wuz 'nuff like er white man ter be boun' thet nobuddy else shouldn't hev et. They glared er minnit, mebbe, then what do you think she done?"

"Screeched, of course," said the Jack of the Dust, without hesitating.

"Ye lubber!" said Old Slater. "Only white ones screeches an' squeals."

"Them's New England antics," Sam Wood said, with a sneer.

"What *did* she do?" questioned Stubbs.

"I ain't sayin' but what ther everlastin' woman wuz in et," Old Slater said. "She kinder straightened up fust, then clasped Fitz, a-callin' of 'im er lot o' sweet Creole names—never did them mongrel lispin's soun' sweeter! Then quicker'n I kin tell et a blade flashed in thet nigger's han' an' *whizz* et went hiss'n' through ther hot air.

"I turned sick, fer I 'lowed Fitz wuz er goner, but *now* I know that she wuz expectin' of et and wuz willin' ter pay ther price like ther thurerbred she wuz, fer she faced roun' suddint, jes' in front o' Fitz, her two arms stretched wide ter shield 'im, and ketched that knife on 'er poor, little breas'bone!"

"Good enough!" said the Jack of the Dust, with hearty if tardy appreciation.

"I'd done er blame' sight too much lookin' on," continued Old Slater, "but I soon put ther 'sassin whar he b'longed. Fitz as white 's 'er ghost, wuz a-holdin' Mimi. Her blood wuz pourin', an' suthin' like er curtin wuz creepin' over 'er eyes, shuttin' out ther light. She tried ter smile—she *wuz* er Princess, sure pop, an' I reck'n, too, she wuz satisfied ter know she'd never hev ter knuckle down ter thet nigger man. '*Doudoux*,' sez she, '*Adieu*.' Them wuz all the words she spoke, an' no young bird never piped 'good-night' enny softer n' sweeter. Then she tried ter put up 'er arms. But 'twuzn't in 'em—poor leetle arms—they dropped, an' she wuz gone!"

"Dead!" gasped Stubbs.

"That's er good name for et in enny lat'tude," replied Old Slater, dryly. He continued in a softer tone: "Fitz lay Mimi down like as ef she wuz er babby, an' him an' me kinder straightened of 'er out. I couldn't help wonderin' ef she hed er mammy to moan over 'er leetle spent life. We lef' thet nigger whar he fell, an' went 'way without er word. Thet night ther *Bender* hauled up 'er anchor an' we went down ter Port o' Prince."

Stubbs sighed.

"Whar thet Creole begun whar she'd lef' off," added Old Slater, savagely.

"How *could* he? . . . Do you mean that he *forgot* Mimi!" cried Stubbs.

"Don't ye go ter gittin' 'sof',' Stubby," said Old Slater. "A man thet's goin' ter 'mount ter shucks in ther service kin forgit *ennything*!"

"But when she died for him!" persisted Stubbs.

"She didn't feel et none ter speak on," Old Slater said, with conviction. "Wimmen are made so 's they kin die easy fer ther men they love."

"Don' git 'xcited, lad," advised Bill Williams. "Yet ain't got nuthin' ter do with et; ther Lord he made 'em ter fill their places."

Old Slater was seemingly searching some chamber of his memory. At length he said:

"White ones, mebbe, dies a *leetle* harder an' they ain't *quite* so likely ter do et, but color don't make no great diff'rence."

"White ones feel—and die!"

It was the boatswain's mate, and he spoke in a voice which forbade contradiction. "*She*——" but his voice broke; he paused on that word, stayed by thoughts too bitter to express. He walked away, without looking at his companions.

"Well, much obliged, Mr. Slater," said the Jack of the Dust. "She was a Jim Dandy, and no mistake."

He, too, walked away, followed by Stubbs. Old Slater looked after the Apprentice. "Humph," said he, with a short laugh. "Thet lad's heart aches an' he dunno *why*. *Thet's youth*. But when I think o' *his* shuttin' of hisself up roun' the mem'ry of a woman——"

He became suddenly silent, but his messmates knew that he meant the boatswain's mate and that words had failed him.

Sam Woods, the man of a rankling reminiscence of New England, began distinctly: "*Thet's* common 'nuff——." But he completed his sentence mentally, and they never knew what he had intended to say.

"Slater," said Bill Williams, under his breath, "wuzn't et *wuth* er straight story ter git thet out er them blame ol' shell-backs?"

"Et wuz," replied the old seaman, emphatically.



A SAINT IN PAWN*

BY ERNST VON WOLKOGEN

Famous Story Series



N the 20th of May, 189—, a light carriage rolled rapidly along one of the finest highways in the world—that which leads from Sorrento to Salerno. On the narrow little back seat sat Count Dietrich von Dölsberg and his bride, the lovely daughter of Counselor von Gumpel. They had spent three weeks on the Riviera and along the gulf of Naples, and for the last week had engaged separate apartments at the inns, and had omitted the good-night kiss. Little misunderstandings had arisen between the newly-married pair. The Countess Lenore was a petted child, exacting and a little imperious, and, above all very obstinate. She was as deeply in love with her husband as he with her, but she greatly resented any attempt to exercise authority over her; so now they sat side-by-side, cold and silent. Count Dietrich was keenly appreciative of the beauties of nature and would gladly have thrown his strong arms about her and whispered in her pretty little ear, "Lenore, only open your eyes and look about you, how can you be so cold among such scenes. How can you give yourself up to such petty whims in the presence of such grandeur and beauty."

But he said nothing till, at a sudden turn in the road, one of the picturesque old Saracenic towns lay before them. Flat-roofed gray stone houses, with outside staircases, arched bridges over the court-yards and narrow alleys. Then he could no longer repress an exclamation of delight and surprise.

"Lenore, look! how wonderfully picturesque! It is the most enchanting little nest in all Italy. We must stop here. Do you hear, coachman? Drive us to the best hotel!"

The coachman smiled pityingly. "The best hotel! There is no choice here. I think we had better drive on. There is nothing here for your Excellencies."

* Translated from the German, for Short Stories, by Mrs. J. M. Lancaster.

"All the same, here I shall stop, if I have to sleep on straw. I must see the place by daylight."

The coachman protested in vain and the young Countess made a few sharp observations on her husband's inconsiderate self-will, but Count Dietrich insisted on stopping.

They turned into the principal street of the little town. An excited crowd stood in front of one of the best houses, shouting and screaming. The carriage was obliged to halt, and the coachman called out to ask what was the matter. At least twenty voices hastened to satisfy his curiosity, but the Count and Countess could only make out that Santa Elena had something to do with it, for "Santa Elena" sounded like a battle-cry above the wild confusion of tongues.

Now a door opened in the high wall of the house and out stepped a portly priest.

The excited crowd rushed up the steps and pushed the old gentleman back against the door, which had been closed behind him. A hundred voices called out a question, then stopped to hear his answer.

The old priest shrugged his shoulders and said, shaking his head, "Nothing can be done. He is as stubborn as a donkey."

Then arose such a howl of rage that even the Neapolitan carriage horses—well used to such demonstrations—shied violently.

Fists were shaken in the air and a few stones thrown at the small windows in front of the house, but at last the old priest managed to make himself heard again, and finally succeeded in dispersing the crowd. The Golden Eagle was only a few steps away and the young couple soon reached it in safety.

The stout little round-faced host received his distinguished guests with the utmost cordiality, and led them through a little orange garden and up a stairway to a flat roof, then over an arched stone bridge and up another stairway, to the lodging assigned them. It was a lofty, vaulted room, with glass doors at either end. The scanty furniture was old-fashioned and rickety, and a slight odor of dust and mould filled the dim, cellar-like apartment. The Count found this ancient banquetting hall far more attractive than the finest rooms in a modern hotel, but Lenore shrugged her shoulders, and sniffed suspiciously about. "It is more like a potato cellar than a bedroom," said she, "and looks as if it had not been dusted since the last century. Pah! how stifling!"

She stepped quickly to one of the two double doors, while the Count hastily opened the other. Each exclaimed in surprise and admiration when the magnificent view met their eyes. *She* looked down upon the steep, rocky wall at whose base was the white high-road, and the picturesque confusion of low, almost windowless houses, and beyond them still, the blue Tyrrhenian sea and the glowing sunset in the background. On *his* side lay the narrow valley with its terraced slopes. On one of these terraces, far below the spot where he stood, was the church, a great mosque-like dome, with two slender, minaret-like towers. And everywhere, on platforms, balconies, flat roofs, were people enjoying the evening coolness, mid song and laughter. He stood there a quarter of an hour, gazing about him and leaning on the broad railing, listening to the evening chimes, the tinkling bells of the herds of goats, the singing, laughing, chatting, quarrelling of many human beings, most of whom he could not see. Then he drew himself up with a deep sigh, walked slowly through the room, now almost dark, and out upon the opposite balcony. There sat his young wife, gazing out upon the fast darkening heavens, where countless stars began to glimmer. He fancied that her beautiful eyes were wet with tears and tried to rouse her sympathy by a deep sigh, but all in vain. She slipped into the room, lighted a candle, and soon he heard her unlock her trunks, take out garments, and unfold and shake them.

Half an hour afterward the host came and escorted them to supper, which was well cooked and daintily served. The fat, curly-headed host was also cook and waiter. Count Dietrich made up for his wife's silence by a lively conversation with the landlord, and after praising the excellent supper, asked for an explanation of the popular disturbance which he had witnessed.

"Ah, you mean the scene before Novelli's house," answered Curly-head, "may the plague take—beg pardon, Signore. The people have good cause to be angry with this Signor Novelli. The worst of it is that he is not only the cloth merchant, banker, usurer, and cut-throat Novelli, but he is also our Podesta (Mayor). If it were not for that, you would probably have seen him hung over his own doorstep."

"Ah, per Bacco! this begins to be interesting," said the Count.

"Well, your Excellency must know that the day after to-morrow, the 22d of May, is the feast of St. Elena, our patron saint,

and there are not many little towns in Italy which can boast such a celebration as ours on her fête day. People flock here from all the country round. It costs us hard work and a great deal of money to do honor to our most holy patroness, but we have good reason to make a special effort, for our church is lucky enough to possess an ancient treasure which is the envy of all Christendom. It is a solid silver bust of the saint, set with precious stones, and with a golden crown upon her head. Our Bishop has an old document which he will show you if your Excellency cares——”

“Not particularly,” said the Count, smiling. “I would rather hear what Signor Novelli has to do with your St. Elena.”

“Ah,” said the little man, “that is a story! I am ashamed to be fellow citizen to such a God-forsaken villain. Our cathedral dates back to Saracenic times, and is naturally rather out of repair, and experts have pronounced it unsafe. But, as we are very poor, we trusted to the dear Lord’s protection and St. Elena’s intercession, till a large stone fell from the wall and killed an old woman. Then, of course, we took up the matter in earnest. The people gave all they could, and His Holiness, the Pope, added something; but it fell far short. Then Novelli offered to make up the deficiency, if we would make him Podesta and give him the Saint’s bust as security. Of course we had to accept his terms. Money is power all the world over, and the devil is in every gold-piece. So, God forgive us, Signor Novelli has the key of the Saint’s shrine, and will only give it up when his interest is paid. We have managed to pay it for five years, but these are hard times. Our cloth factory is closed, and the taxes are heavy, so we are still about one thousand lire short, and Novelli, the hard-hearted wretch, will not give us the key. The women and the priests have tried to influence him through his young wife—the most beautiful little woman in all the country round, and a perfect angel—of course, a man can buy anything with money—the old ruffian is desperately fond of her, but even Signora Elena can do nothing with him when there is money in question.

“Only think! she is named for our Saint, but that makes no difference to him, the old scoundrel.”

“And what becomes of the festa,” said the Count. “Could not you pay your interest out of the money you have raised for that?”

“Ah, your Excellency does not know our people,” said

Curly-head. "The band must play and the fireworks must be set off, or we might expect a little revolution. The worst part of the whole affair, Excellency, is the mortification, for strangers will flock here and ridicule us because we have pawned our Saint and cannot redeem her. Devil take the Podesta."

"Amen!" added the Count, then lighted a cigar and strolled out for a lonely walk by the sea-shore, while his wife, pleading fatigue, went to her room and tried to forget her heartache over a French novel.

Early the next morning the Count opened the door and stepped out on the balcony which looked out toward the sea. His wife was still asleep and the young husband, as he bent over her, could hardly refrain from waking her with a kiss. But he must not be weak and so lose the upper hand for life.

Count Dietrich gazed gloomily out upon the smiling heavens and the pretty old town bathed in sunshine; bit his lip and tugged nervously at his mustache. How happy they might be if only this self-willed young creature—How would it all end? And yet every day he was more and more in love with her.

He paced slowly up and down the broad balcony, then went on tip-toe back into the room. Lenore was awake and her eyes were full of tears. He saw that, though she turned her head away.

"Good-morning, Lenore. Will you not at least say good-morning to me?"

"Good-morning."

That was all. He stamped his foot, got his field-glass and went out again, slamming the door behind him. The distant sounds of the gay southern street-life filled the fresh morning air. Children's voices came shrill from same quarter near at hand and when he turned his glass in that direction, he saw, on a flat roof, perhaps fifty feet distant, three lovely children, from three to six years old. The youngest, an exquisitely beautiful child, was kicking and crying furiously in his little sister's arms and she tried in vain to quiet him. A door opened and out came a young girl in a loose white gown, over which fell her luxurious black hair. She took the crying child in her arms, wiped his eyes, kissed him and danced about with him till he quieted down. Then she came to the edge of the parapet and pointed out to the little one all sorts of things to divert his mind.

If Count Dietrich had admired the child, he was enraptured with the lovely face which glowed in tender freshness from its

frame of coal-black hair. Through his glass he could see even her white teeth and the dimple in her round cheek when she smiled. Now she turned and looked directly at him. Heavens, what eyes! Alas, she saw him looking at her and went quickly into the house with the child in her arms.

The two other children came and looked over the parapet at the blond foreign gentleman. He nodded at them, then threw them a kiss. The children laughed and ran away. The young woman came out again, this time with her hair carefully arranged. She looked at him smilingly, then seated herself at her sewing, while the children played about her. It was so charming a sight, that the Count quite forgot his heartache and even that he was hungry for breakfast.

A hand was laid on his arm and he started like a sinner caught in the act.

"What interests you so much?" asked Countess Lencre in a cold, indifferent tone.

The Count was annoyed and spoke with exaggerated admiration of his charming neighbors, thinking to arouse her jealousy.

The Countess looked through the glass, then said, turning away.

"Strange taste! Shall we not go down to breakfast?"

He made her a formal little bow and accompanied her to the guest-room below.

"Don Pasquale," said he to the host, "there is a raving beauty in your neighborhood. Are there many such pretty girls in your town?"

Curly-head bowed and said, "Your Excellency is very kind. We have indeed some pretty girls, but I do not know which of them lives near here."

Count Dietrich described the locality and had hardly mentioned the three children, when Don Pasquale interrupted him:

"Ah, it must be Signora Novelli herself."

"But she looks like a girl of sixteen."

"Quite true; she looks very young, but it must be the Signora, for all the other women in the house are old."

"Corpo-di-Bacco!" cried the Count enthusiastically, "then I solemnly swear that for a kiss from that angel, I will gladly pay the thousand lire out of my own pocket to her skinflint of a husband."

"Your Excellency must be joking," said Don Pasquale incredulously.

"And your joke is in rather bad taste," murmured the Countess in German.

Count Dietrich pretended not to hear her remark and insisted that his offer was made in all seriousness. The guest who was willing to give one thousand lire for a kiss, went up several degrees in Don Pasquale's estimation, and shortly after the Count found him in close conversation at the door with several portly old men. Don Pasquale approached him at once and whispered that these dignitaries had just returned from another interview with the Podesta, but all in vain. "Ready money and nothing but ready money could get the key out of his pocket." "Are we really to understand," added Don Pasquale, "that your Excellency was in earnest about the kiss?"

"I give you my word of honor."

"Ah, really? But perhaps your gracious lady might——"

"Oh, my wife is not at all jealous."

"Ah, how the German husbands are to be envied! I beg pardon, your Excellency."

"For God's sake, don't let the story get out!" cried the Count.

"No, no!" cried Curly-head. "But it will be very difficult to get at Signora Novelli. The old man keeps his wife as close as if he were a Pasha. He hardly lets her go to church."

"And what do you suppose the Signora herself would say to such a proposition?"

Don Pasquale smiled slyly. "Well, it is for the dear Saint's sake!"

"Of course, of course!" laughed the Count. "All earthly considerations are excluded. Now see what can be done, and in half an hour I will be back to luncheon."

Don Pasquale's first step was to tell the chief dignitaries of the town of the munificent stranger's offer. How astonished they were! one thousand lire for a kiss. These foreigners must be out-and-out fools! But then, what a piece of good luck for their dear fatherland, that they were such fools! If the fair Elena would only consent! And why not? The German was *un gentiluomo molto simpatico*! and a much more agreeable person to kiss than grizzled, unshaven, old Ettore Novelli. Was it not her bounden duty, too, as wife of the principal citizen, to make a little sacrifice in honor of the most holy Empress Elena! so off they set for the house of the wicked holder of the key.

They broke up into parties of two, and gained access to the

gardens and roofs of houses near Donna Elena's. Two old men on the right, two on the left, and the third couple—one of whom was Don Pasquale—at the back of the house.

The wily Don Pasquale, with his companion's help, climbed one of the largest trees near the garden wall. This brought him to the height of the roof of Novelli's house, but he could not look over the parapet. He began to call cautiously "Pst—hello—hello!" And as he paused to listen, with outstretched neck, all eyes and ears, he heard to the right and left, a low "Pst—pst." His confederates were also at work. Then something white appeared over the edge of the parapet. With a bold leap Don Pasquale sprang to the ground and crouched with his companions against the wall. He had seen the Podesta, the old gallows-bird!

"What is it? Who's there? Look out, you bad boys, I'll catch you!" shrieked the old man, while the guilty six stole cautiously away. A few minutes later they met in the street and scratched their heads.

What now? They finally decided to apply directly to the highest clerical authority.

The worthy Padre Sebastiano could hardly refrain from a right worldly expression, so great was his surprise. They had to assure him again and again that the distinguished foreigner was not joking.

Finally, he leaned back in his chair, crossed his legs, took a pinch of snuff, and gave the matter his serious consideration, while the worthy messengers gazed anxiously at him, trying to read his thoughts. Then Padre Sebastiano pushed his beretta over his left ear, and with uplifted eyebrows thoughtfully scratched the right side of his head, then folded his hands across his little round stomach and began to twirl his thumbs. Then a corner of his mouth began to twitch, as he thought of the various sacrifices made for the good of the Church, by holy women in ancient and modern times, and at last the old gentleman broke out into a hearty laugh.

"A most absurd story!" cried he, rubbing his hands. "As you know, my friends, the Lord Bishop comes to-morrow. We must try and get this business settled before he comes. I think I will undertake it. The good Bishop will absolve me. Dear me, what does the proverb say: 'A kiss given in honor harms nobody.' And if it should serve to liberate our Holy Patroness! Old Novelli will certainly give in when he sees the money."

"Oh, Holy Pity!" cried one of the old men, aghast. "Reverend Sir, you are not thinking of making the proposition to the Podesta himself?"

"Yes, why not?" answered the priest. "He is the lord and master of Signora Elena's lips."

"Then all is lost," said Don Pasquale, in distress. "His avarice is great, but his jealousy is greater. I know what I am talking about, Reverend Father!" and the five old men nodded assent. Then Padre Sebastiano became very serious.

"So you want me to treat with the fair lady herself; ah-ha," he took another pinch of snuff, reflected a little, then started to his feet with a comical sigh, and said,

"God help me! so I am going to make a go-between of myself in my old days! But what will not a man do for his Patron Saint. I may as well start at once."

The old men looked relieved, for it was well known that Padre Sebastiano, with his gentle, coaxing ways, could wind the women round his finger.

They went contentedly home to tell their families, with an air of mystery, that St. Elena's shrine would be opened at the proper time.

Padre Sebastiano put on his newest Sunday cassock, brushed his hat with special care and started off. He chose the least frequented streets, so that no one might detain him on the way, and also that he might reach the Podesta's house unobserved. His plan of operation was, however, not very clear to him. More than once he stood still to think it over. His mind was so occupied that before he knew it he found himself on a terrace overlooking the Novelli's back-building. He could see Signora Elena at her needle-work and her little ones playing about. By a round-about way Padre Sebastiano reached the wall of the same fruit garden where Don Pasquale had lain in ambush. The whole neighborhood seemed deserted, so he might venture to try and attract Signora Novelli's attention. But he was a little man and would be obliged to climb a tree as Don Pasquale had done before him. To be sure, he was rather afraid of spoiling his new cassock, and besides—what if any one should see him! He laughed softly to himself: "Ah, saints in Heaven, I certainly never dreamed of playing such boyish pranks in the service of my blessed patroness!"

Then he began to make cautious efforts to attract Signora Elena's attention, but in vain. Becoming impatient, he plucked an orange and threw it on the roof.

Immediately there arose a loud, childish outcry. Oh, gracious powers above! had he in his holy zeal hurt one of the innocent youngsters? He would be in a pretty predicament if the cross-grained Podesta should accuse him of assault and battery. Fortunately, however, the fruit was ripe and soft.

Then he heard the mother's soft voice soothing the child; the next moment Signora Elena's lovely face peeped over the parapet, trying to find out who had been guilty of so malicious an action.

She began scolding in an absurdly soft, childish voice. "Who was that? You naughty boy! I'll——" But she got no further, for she caught sight of the good padre, her reverend confessor, a comical looking object, perched in the green tree-top, smiling up at her rather sheepishly and gesticulating eagerly with his walking-stick.

"Good-day, my daughter!" said he in a loud whisper. "I must positively speak to you without your husband's knowledge. Are you sure that nobody is listening?"

"No, no indeed, Father!" answered her sweet voice plaintively. "I am never safe from him anywhere and especially to-day. He thinks that there was somebody in that tree before, trying to attract my attention. Was that you too, Father?"

"No, no, daughter; that was Pasquale, the curly-head."

"Oh, merciful saints!" cried the little woman, quite beside herself. "What can they want of me?"

"A kiss, my little pigeon; only a kiss," whispered Padre Sebastiano with a roguish smile. Her childish terror made her look so charming, that he could not resist the temptation to add to the little woman's bewilderment. Then she stood with wide eyes and open mouth; the crimson blood rushed to her face; then she uttered a low cry and vanished.

After a while she came back and peeped shyly over the parapet. "Reverend father, are you still there?" whispered she, behind her hand. The Reverend father had been sucking an orange to while away the time, and had not seen her return. When he heard her voice he started and answered with his mouth full of orange juice, "Yes, indeed, my daughter, I am still here. Why did you run away in such a hurry?"

"Oh, I am so dreadfully frightened. Suppose somebody should hear us. He follows me about everywhere and the servants are not to be trusted. But it is not right for you to make fun of a poor woman like me!"

Padre Sebastiano answered eagerly: "But I am not in fun. What I said is sober earnest. Can you not come down into the garden, child, so that I can tell you about it?"

"No, no, impossible. All the doors are locked. But he has given me permission to go to church this evening."

"Alone?"

"Yes, alone. He is not going. He is afraid of the people, proud as he is."

"Very well, I shall rely upon your coming;" said Padre Sebastiano gravely, "for, let me tell you, Santa Elena's ransom depends on you and you alone. God bless you, my child!" and with a kindly smile he climbed down from his perch.

A quarter of an hour later, he knocked gently at the door of the Count's apartment.

The Count had returned from his walk warm and dusty, and stood at the wash-stand in his shirt-sleeves.

He thought that Don Pasquale was knocking to announce dinner, so called out, "Come in!" and in came Padre Sebastiano with a polite bow. "Ah," was the Count's first thought, "that chatterbox of a landlord has brought the clergy about my ears. Now, I suppose this Reverend father will point out to me the exceeding impropriety and sinfulness of my offer, and show me how a miserable heretic like myself can earn the Church's blessing and St. Elena's thanks by spending one thousand lire, leaving the kiss out of the bargain, however."

He was so confused that his knowledge of Italian deserted him, and his apologies for his incomplete toilet as well as his inquiries as to what had procured to him the honor of so unexpected a visit, were a jumble of several different tongues.

The Reverend gentleman was also embarrassed and their mutual apologies would never have come to an end, if the Countess had not come in from the balcony and invited Padre Sebastiano to take a seat.

She sat down opposite him smiling, and opened the conversation in the most matter of course tone of voice, by the question, "I suppose you have come about the kiss, Reverend Father?"

Padre Sebastiano was so surprised that he nearly fell off his chair, and the Count who was just about to bury his face in the dripping sponge, let the sponge fall back into the basin and spattered the water all about.

"I beg pardon," stammered he, "my wife means——" he did

not finish the sentence, but plunged his face into the water to hide his embarrassment.

Padre Sebastiano looked in amazement from the Count to his beautiful young wife, and at last managed to say: "Yes, of course—I mean—Signor Pasquale told me that your Excellency—— Does the Signora know about it?"

"Yes, certainly," said the Countess, smiling. "My husband has no secrets from me. I think it is a charming idea."

The Count, with his red face buried in a towel, could not help muttering, "Well, upon my word!"

The Countess pretended not to hear him, and went on quite composedly, "I have been looking at the little woman all the morning. She is really lovely. I must confess that if I were a man I would give two thousand lire for a kiss from her. Indeed, I am afraid I should go so far as to carry her off from her old scarecrow of a husband."

"I beg pardon," interrupted the Count, "even if you were on your wedding-journey?"

"Certainly, even if I were on my wedding-journey," answered she, with a gay little toss of her head.

The Count did not know whether to laugh or be angry. He was disgusted with the whole affair. If his wife took that view of it, the whole joke was spoiled.

The Countess went on cheerfully: "And you think that the young woman will consent to the kiss?"

The Reverend Father blushed like a bashful boy, and answered, shyly, "Yes; I do not see why she should refuse. Your husband, Contessa, is by no means repulsive—I—I—mean——"

"Thank you," said the Count, bowing politely, as he tied on a clean cravat.

"And then, the most important consideration is, that the kiss is given for our dear Saint. Otherwise I should, of course, have had nothing to do with the matter."

"Ah, then, you have yourself prepared Signora Elena for it?" asked the Countess.

"Oh, no, unfortunately I could not succeed in doing so," answered he, with a comical sigh, "but she has promised to come to church this evening. The Lord Bishop will be there, you know. The church is beautifully dressed. The clergy and choir-boys will wear their finest vestments. Oh, your Excellency must see it! It will be fine. And after the service, when the people are gone and the church is dark, I think—I think she

will not refuse. And if she should be so foolish, the Lord Bishop will have a serious word to say about it."

The Countess could not help laughing, and the old gentleman laughed heartily with her. The Count also laughed, but rather sheepishly, and said:

"So it seems that this unfortunate kiss is to be solemnized as a sacred ceremony in the presence of the clergy. I beg your pardon, Reverend Father, but this arrangement does not altogether meet my views."

"Oh, excuse me," said the Padre, politely. "Your Excellencies will make what arrangements you please. That is, if your offer was made in sober earnest."

The Count glanced at his wife. How gladly would he have withdrawn his offer if she had only raised her eyes to his in loving reproof.

But she was not looking at him. The same ironical smile was still on her lips. So he hastened to reiterate that he was quite in earnest in the foolish affair. The Padre bowed deferentially and begged for a written assurance that the Count's offer was made in good faith.

"Pardon me," said he, shrugging his shoulders; "I myself do not doubt your sincerity, but Signora Elena might fancy that somebody was trying to play a bad joke upon her, and the Lord Bishop also might——"

"Certainly, certainly," interrupted the Count, impatiently. "Just as you please. Will you be kind enough to dictate what you wish me to write? My Italian is not quite equal to the occasion."

Ten minutes later Padre Sebastiano bowed himself out with the valuable document in his pocket and calling down Heaven's choicest blessings on the heretical heads of the Count and Countess.

The Count began to brush and polish his nails, but his hands shook with nervousness, and he waited impatiently for his wife to say something which should open the way to the reconciliation which now seemed so near.

But no, she would not speak. She hoped for words, and he paced up and down the room till she opened her charming little mouth to say:

"Shall we go down? I am dreadfully hungry."

"So am I," said he, hastily opening the door for her to pass.

Countess Lenore ate with good appetite and praised the

simple dishes, while an odd little mocking smile hovered about her pretty lips, and her delicate nostrils quivered as though with suppressed laughter. The Count thought she had never looked so beautiful, but she was laughing at his expense, and he was furious at finding himself in so ridiculous a position. Confound it! What a fool he had made of himself!

He, Dietrich von Dölsberg, Count of the Empire and First Lieutenant (on half pay) in the German army, had, merely to pique his willful little wife, offered one thousand lire for a kiss! A kiss, moreover, from the mother of three children, whom he had seen only from a distance. Very likely, on nearer inspection, he should discover that she was pock-marked, or at least horribly freckled. And then these Italian women are so fond of garlic and similar perfumes. Pah! Besides, this one thousand lire did not really belong to him, for it was part of the provision for the expenses of the wedding-journey, which he owed to the princely generosity of his father-in-law. It was too abominable, too atrocious! Of course it was all her fault; she had begun it, and if he should now acknowledge himself in the wrong, she would never let him forget it. How gladly would he have laid the one thousand lire on St. Elena's altar and renounced all claim to that confounded kiss, if his wife would make only the least little advance to him! But she did nothing of the kind, but took good care not to say a word the whole afternoon which he could interpret as an attempt at reconciliation. When evening came, the bells announced with joyful clamor the approach of St. Elena's festa. The day's heat had been succeeded by a cool, refreshing sea-breeze, and the Count, weary with climbing about the rocky streets, sat smoking in the balcony.

The Countess came out and said, still with the same ironical smile:

"Well, don't you hear the bells calling you? St. Elena is waiting for her deliverer."

Count Dietrich tossed his head angrily and tugged at his mustache. But after a moment's reflection, he answered quite meekly, "Yes, I am ready. Are you going with me?"

"I? Oh no indeed! I would not be so indiscreet as to interfere with your amusements."

The Count sprang to his feet and his eyes flashed. He took two steps toward his wife.

"Do you know Lore, I——" He had almost humbled himself to make the suicidal confession; "do you know Lore, I have

made an awful fool of myself!" But just in time he noticed her calm, superior smile, and his words remained unspoken. He seized his hat and with a stiff little military bow, he left the fast darkening room.

With grim determination in his look, like a noble criminal determined to carry out his own sentence, he walked down the street to the church. The whole population seemed collected in front of the cathedral. Tall poles, wound with red, white and green, and the scaffolding for the fireworks were already erected in the Piazza. Count Dietrich pushed his way through the crowd. The flat-roofed rotunda was crowded and on the grand altar was the richly gilded shrine of St. Elena, still with closed doors. The Bishop and a numerous assemblage of priests all in gold-embroidered vestments stood about the altar, bowed, knelt, chanted and prayed in monotonous unison.

Choir-boys in red gowns and white surplices, intoned with shrill, childish voices, knelt down, stood up again and swung the censers to and fro. A constellation of lighted tapers gleamed through the clouds of incense, and the host of believers whispered and laughed with the utmost unconstraint, like a subdued orchestral accompaniment to the religious pantomime.

The Count was fascinated by the gay confusion, and half bewildered by the incense smoke and the dim candle light.

At the close of the ceremonies the clergy formed a procession and made a short visit to each of the saints in the little side chapels. The Count stood leaning against one of the slender Moorish pillars which supported the low gallery which ran round the rotunda.

The gay procession passed; everybody bowed deeply, some women fell on their knees and tried to kiss the Bishop's hand outstretched in blessing. Just behind the Bishop walked Padre Sebastiano, his kindly old face full of anxious lines. His eyes were searching here and there over the heads of the crowd. Ah, now he catches sight of the eccentric German gentleman. He touches his arm in passing and whispers: "I am in despair, my dear sir; she will not do it, the God-forsaken creature! She is in such fear of her tyrant's anger, that even the promise of all manner of heavenly blessings cannot move her."

He kept hold of the Count's sleeve and drew him gently along. Suddenly he grasped him tightly by the arm, so that the Count could hardly suppress an exclamation of pain.

"Eccola!" (there she is)—whispered the Padre hastily, and

nodded toward a little woman, kneeling near by. She had just caught the Bishop's hand and was looking up beseechingly into the benignant Prelate's face.

The Count broke from the Padre's grasp and stood as if rooted to the spot. Yes, it was she! and she was far, far prettier close at hand than at a distance. He had never seen such fabulously innocent, childish eyes in a woman's face, and it seemed far less idiotic and reprehensible to have offered one thousand lire for a kiss from those lips, than it had done half an hour ago.

After the procession had passed, he stepped forward intending to speak to the devout little beauty, but she seemed to recognize him and a burning blush suffused her pale cheeks.

She rose hastily, drew her black lace veil over her face and slipped away in the crowd. After a moment's hesitation, the Count followed her. He wanted to make her some flattering speech, to see those soft cheeks redden once more, and those wonderful eyes raised to him in gratitude, when he should tell her that he renounced the kiss unless given willingly, and that he would redeem the Saint's image even without so sweet a reward, for no other reason than that her name was also Elena. But he had hesitated too long; she had already disappeared in the crowd. The Count elbowed his way recklessly out, but she was nowhere to be seen, neither on the steps nor in the Piazza. Could she have slipped out by another door? He ran around the church. No, there was no other entrance. Perhaps she was still inside. He entered the Cathedral again. Choir-boys and acolytes were extinguishing the lights. She was not there.

But wait, what was that? A slender female form with a black lace mantle over the head! Ah, there she was at last! She stood below the pulpit in earnest conversation with a black cassock which could hardly belong to anybody but Padre Sebastiano. Now the old gentleman turned around. It was indeed he. The sound of footsteps had attracted his attention and when he recognized the Count, he opened the little bronze door under the pulpit steps and pushed the lady through.

The Count rushed up, seized the good priest by the arm and in his excitement said to him in German: "What have you done with her? why do you hide her from me? Am I to have my kiss or not?"

Padre Sebastiano placed his broad back against the door and waved the excited man gently away. A broad smile lighted

up his kindly face and he cooed softly to him, "Gently, gently; be quiet, be quiet, my son! She has changed her mind, the little pigeon. You shall have your kiss, Eccellenza, but not here in the lighted church. The poor little thing is too timid."

"Of course, of course; in outer darkness, if she likes it better," cried the Count impatiently. Then he tried to get hold of the door handle.

"Excuse me a moment. Do you happen to have the one thousand lire by you? If so, I must beg you to——" and with an insinuating smile he held out his open hand.

The Count felt in his breast-pocket and said with an angry shrug: "How suspicious you Italians are. Well, I'll pay in advance," and hastily took a red bank-note from his pocket-book and pressed it into the hand of the priest, who now drew aside with a very polite bow.

Now at last the road was clear. Padre Sebastiano himself threw open the little bronze door for him. His heart beat faster than on the day when, as an ensign, he had fought his first duel. The door closed behind him. It was very dark, but by the faint gleam of light from the little shuttered window, he could see a shadowy form. He whispered softly, "Signora Elena!" A garment rustled, the shadowy figure glided toward him, and the next moment he felt a pair of soft warm lips against his own. Two arms were thrown about his neck, and the delicate little hands clasped behind his head.

His expectations were more than realized. Never in her most loving moments had his Lenora kissed him so tenderly, so fervently. Ah, these hot-blooded southern women knew how to love! It would be a pious mission, a work of humanity to rescue this lovely creature from that horrible, ogreish miser. He clasped her closer and warmly returned her caresses.

But now sighed Lenore, "Stop, stop! enough! You will smother me! Forgive me, Dietrich! forgive me! I have been a fool! Forgive me the deceit. I love you so dearly. I cannot live when you are angry with me."

The Count's arms sank helplessly down. "You, Lenore!" cried he, quite overcome with astonishment.

"Yes, you dear, faithless man. It is I, your wedded wife! To be sure I cannot give you kisses worth one thousand lire apiece, but——"

He silenced her with kisses, and murmured, "You dear, sweet, lovely creature; can you indeed forgive me?"

He felt her tears upon his cheeks, though she did not answer, and then they went out of the dark, close, little room.

Padre Sebastiano stood outside the door and shook his finger playfully at them.

"Aha!" said he, "You have kept me waiting a long time!"

With one accord they each seized one of his hands and stooped to kiss it. He drew back and said modestly, shaking his gray head: "No, no; not that, my dear children. I do not deserve that. I am only a poor, sinful man, and have been cherishing sinful thoughts. May St. Elena intercede for me when I come to make my atonement. But I am a priest and have power to absolve from sin when I see true repentance. You are, I know, arch-heretics and Lutherans, but if you do not despise God's mercy——"

Count Dietrich seized his wife's hand and drew her to her knees beside him, and the old priest laid his hands on them in blessing, and said, in rather a trembling voice: "Rise up absolved from sin, and depart in peace!"

Hand in hand the reunited pair left the church. Arm in arm they wandered up and down the streets among the singing, merrymaking populace. And the next day, when the glittering procession bore in its midst the jewelled silver image, and rose leaves fluttered down from every wall and house-top on the crimson canopy above it, and at night, when in the Piazza great fire-wheels whirled whizzing and sputtering, the magnificent rockets rose high in the air and illumined the narrow valley and the dark sea with a glittering rain of gay balls and glowing sparks; when the band played its loudest and the children shouted with delight, none in the whole joy-intoxicated city shared in the festivities with such devout gratitude to the blessed St. Elena as the blond German Count and his radiant little wife.



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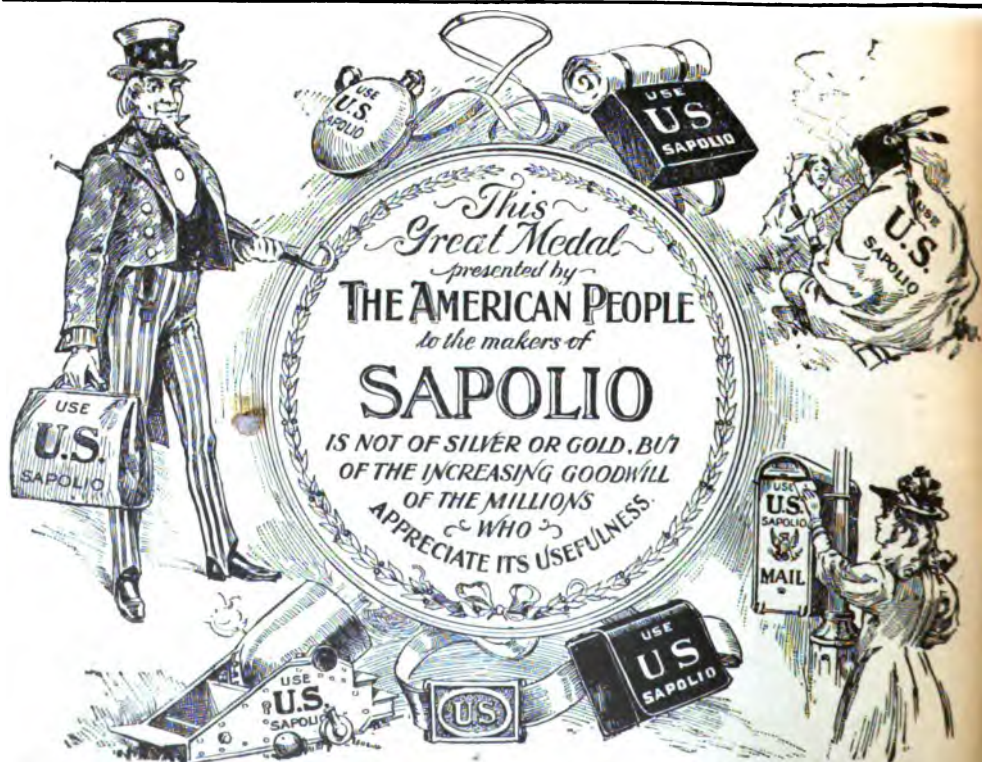
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BY ELIZABETH CAVAZZA

Author of "Don Finimondone," etc.

THAT Sunday—like every other for the last two years, as often as the Lord sent the day—Daddy Cheli Deda, seated on the steps of the church with the old men of the village, his friends, related the story of his meeting with a toad that was none else than one of the Ladies of Night—blessed where they are and where they inhabit!

The compari, for duty of friendship, drew out that story, of which they never tired, some of them by questions and a few by discrediting it—of these was Uncle 'Nzulu Malvedda who, also he, had been present at that famous moment, and ought to have supported what Daddy Cheli said. But were there ever lacking in this world people of little faith!

But before the next Sunday nobody, not even Uncle 'Nzulu, had anything more to say against it. In fact, they judged, Daddy Cheli can see and hear things which neither ring bells nor are written in big letters.

He was a peasant of the old stamp; of those who belong to the earth and talk to it face to face; who are always looking at

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the sky to know what the weather will be; and who have a saying for every case. He was content to live as he had lived, and when people complained of this and of that, he saw no reason for it. There was Master Tino the carpenter, Uncle 'Nzulu's son, who, after learning his trade, had gone to the town and set

up a shop and a family; he, when he came now and then to the village to see his parents, never finished talking about taxes and bad government, and how life was a misery, it was, until they felt those lamentations of his make one's stomach sink. But the worthy Daddy Cheli gave it him over the voice, as is the saying:

"We are not the masters in this world," he said. "Because, after the good Lord and the Madonna, there's destiny, and our Ladies and Mistresses—may they be blessed and increase. And whoever does not believe in the Ladies, I wish that they

may not give him a hard lesson. No, we are not the masters. To say nothing else, there are the barons who have rights over us."

For the old fellow couldn't get it into his head that things in these days are not as they were in the days of the Bourbons, when the barons laid hands upon the people and their goods—although he knew very well that this was an idea of his, because in fact he had fought when Garibaldi drove away the strangers. But he had fought almost without knowing why, picking up sticks and stones, firing the gun which somebody put into his hands, seeing red shirts flame before his eyes, having his head confused with noise and with a dull rage. That was so many years ago; and afterward the country had been quiet, and the people had patience again with everything, because it was different, although they could hardly have told how.



But Garibaldi had been in Sicily and had swept away the strangers.

"And of those sweepings, neither before my door nor my neighbor's, Lord," said Daddy Cheli Deda.

But the Ladies—called diversely the Ladies of Night, of outdoors, of the place, of the house—these are the ones who command us and are to be respected always and everywhere. For they know how to bring good and evil into the house. More than one of the old men, Daddy Cheli's neighbors, could tell about the Ladies—but their facts always had happened to a friend of the person who told it to them. There was, for instance, the cousin of compare Minicu, the blacksmith, who one night was awakened by a bright light, better than day, in his room, and saw at the foot of his bed three beautiful matrons who invited him to arise and dance; and because he would not, he remained so stiff that there was wanted more than the doctor to uncramp his joints; it took the white witch, and even then he had a leg so spoiled that he got the name of 'Zu Cannedda (Uncle Leg-bone). And the wife of Japicu, the herdsman, who left her baby in the cradle while she went to carry the dinner to her man up on the mountain; and coming home, she found the creature under the chest of drawers where the Ladies of the place had put it for diversion. And still worse, that other mother, a bad housekeeper, a real slattern—and we know that the Ladies love neatness and order—whose child they took away, replacing it with a changeling, a poor little body the color of clay, that screamed all the time and wasted like a lighted taper. And how in many houses, of a Thursday, when they are permitted to go abroad and work their will, the Ladies entered by the keyhole to reward or punish, according to the case. All these things and others were known, if only at second-hand. But Daddy Cheli Deda had seen with his eyes and touched with his hands, and thus he told and retold:

"I was breaking sods on the glebe, over there beyond the almond-trees, in company with compare 'Nzulu here present——"

"So much is true; I was there," interjected Uncle 'Nzulu coldly.

"——And at noon we seated ourselves in the shade of a rock, to eat a mouthful. When lo, there peered out of a crevice a little crooked face with shining eyes, the face of a toad that came hopping toward us, a botta, of those big ones. She had in the middle of the head a yellow line like the parting of a

woman's hair; and she looked at us as if speech was hardly lacking to her. Compare 'Nzulu picked up a stone to make an end of her, but I caught his arm. 'And what would you do?' I said to him. 'Think that she may be a signora.' O, would you get some ugly harm? Let her be, or you might lose the right hand that would cast the stone. Neither would a signora permit herself to be driven away.' So I persuaded him;



and seeing that he dropped the stone, I began to make the compliments due: 'Beautiful signora, what do you command? Some bits of bread, or a little wine?' The botta accepted what I offered to her, thrusting out her tongue, slender as a needle, to drink the drops of wine which I poured upon a flat stone for her. Then I asked her if she had eaten and drunk well and was content; to this she answered that she was very content."

"And I heard nothing of all this," protested Uncle 'Nzulu Malvedda.

"And what fault is it of mine if you are a simpleton?" replied Daddy Cheli, and continued: "I took care to make a soft couch for the toad with a handful of grass; and at Ave Maria I tied her up in my pocket-handkerchief and carried her to the house. There she honors us by staying in a grotto of small stones that I made for her under the hedge; and going away to the fields, I never fail to salute her, adding:

'If you wish to come with me,
You will make me company.'

With the Ladies, our Mistresses, we must use good manners."

"What stuff! talk!" sneered Uncle 'Nzulu, who was infected with the new blunders of his son, Master Tino, a dweller in the town, where there is no longer any innocence.

The other old fellows, whether they said more or less, were on the side of Daddy Cheli. But they changed the subject, seeing Uncle 'Nzulu inflamed, and spoke of the fields and whether it would be a good year.

There they staid in the mild March evening, until the stars began to appear in the dusk, and to the left the clustered lights of the town, and higher, almost overhead, a solitary gleam that was from a window of the house of the Barons Ciminna, up there beyond the terraces covered with orange-trees and the long lines of Indian figs that climbed the steep side of the mountain.

In the little village they were at peace; but when Master Tino the next day returned to the town, it appeared as if war had broken out. That morning compare Peppi Mosca, a poor swine-herd, had wished to bring home a tumulo of meal, and because at the toll-gate he lacked five centesimi—thirty-five centesimi they pretended for that little of meal, those overbearing guards—they even took the rosary from his neck and kept it for a pledge. His mother stood for hours in the doorway of her house, looking up and down the street, wringing her hands and lamenting, "They would make us lose this world and the other." A boy, his cousin, took a fagot on his shoulder and went through the lanes shouting, "Let us go to burn the town offices." And Nunzia Defeo, his betrothed, ran about as if mad, crying, "Petroleum, give me petroleum, holy Christians."

The women followed her, ten, twenty, a hundred, and betook themselves to the townhouse. There Don Vincenzo Pipitone, one of the common councillors, did what he could to calm them; but they accused him of falsifying the books:

"Who was it set down for my man a tax upon five mules, when Saint Aloï knows that we have only one, and that lame?"

"And your family are always common councillors, as the Filipella and their relatives are always syndics!"

"And you have a camorra together, so that says the proverb: 'The big hog pays no taxes!'"

"Bread in the piazza and justice in the palace!"

The women possessed themselves of the keys of the water supply and of all the papers that they could lay their hands on.



Don Pipitone, poor man, did not know to which saint to make his vows, so much fear he had of these furies.

Also the leaders of the secret society of the Fascio,—fellows that everybody knew liked to hear themselves talk, and wore good coats, and wished to eat without working too much, and if they had one thought for the peasants, had ten for the offices which they had not obtained at the last election—these, together with others who let themselves be taken with fine words and believed all that was told them, were gathered at the drug-shop. The syndic had despatched a man on horseback to Palermo to

beg that soldiers should be sent to keep order ; for in the city—and a real providence it was—there was military rule, and the General Morra di Lavriano, a hand of the Lord, to set things to rights.

Just as Master Tino had mounted on a chair in the doorway of the drug-shop to harangue the crowd, and the members of the Fascio were hanging upon his lips, the sound of drum and fife was heard down the road and the soldiers came at a quick-step into the town. None too soon, for the toll-gate and the collector's office were burning, and in front of the townhouse the women had made a bonfire of the papers which they had seized, and poured petroleum over the heap, which blazed in air. The urchins were hopping about it, half naked ; the women, as if possessed, were crying and scolding, and some had even come to scratching and pulling hair. Father Antonino, the priest, stood in his doorway recommending peace for the Lord's sake. The mother of Peppi Mosca went about carrying a vine-stake with portraits of the King and Queen tied to it like a banner. "They are the ones who can help us ! Long live the King ! Long live the Queen ! Vi-i-i-va !" cried some ; and "Down with the taxes !" others.

The syndic appeared upon his balcony and spoke to the people, entreating order, and only went into the house after a stone had grazed his cheek. The captain of the troops raised his voice, counselling and commanding the crowd to disperse ; the soldiers, who had been instructed in their duty, thrilled like hounds in a leash, but stood still. The trumpeter was ordered to sound a peal to warn the people to go to their homes. All at once a woman thrust herself forward and stared in the face of the captain : "Is it you, Andrea Cardillo, who come to kill your townfolk ?"

She drew the trigger of an old carabine that missed fire. A shot went off among the crowd ; some of the soldiers believed it to be a signal for them, but wishing to hurt no one, they fired in the air. Stones and tiles and fagots flew about ; the people surged noisily here and there, overturning some of the weaker ones. "To your houses, everybody !" shouted Captain Cardillo, with a voice like a mariner's trumpet in a storm. The soldiers were excited ; they shot as fast as their Wetterlys would fire, but always in the air. The town guards, taking courage, made some arrests ; and, little by little, the disorder was reduced.

"So much is done," said the captain, with satisfaction.

At that moment a man, panting, ill-clad, heated, came running down the way which led by zigzags up to the house of the Barons Ciminna. "Send soldiers," this one begged, "to the baron's house. An attack is feared. Your excellency, send help! Donna Ninfa makes so many compliments and asks it as a favor."

Donna Ninfa! That name struck the ear of Captain Cardillo. Then she, never forgotten, was in danger and wanted his aid! He—who for some years, ever since she became the wife of the old baron, had absented himself from his native town—now felt a need to spoil his peace by going to see her again.

"I'll come myself. Lieutenant, I leave you to preserve order here in the town. I take half-a-dozen men with me; that will suffice."

So the lieutenant, a blonde boy, turned his blue eyes about the piazza and felt himself a real military dictator, clement indeed, but in no way unequal to Julius Cæsar. The captain, with the six men, went away with the messenger from the baron's house.

Don Sulpizio, the younger of the two brothers-in-law of Donna Ninfa, was town clerk. He really needed an office, of the communal government, because so much of the ex-feudal lands brought in little or nothing; and in the house of the Ciminna they lived as poorly as others, only with that pride which gnaws like hunger itself added to their straits. When, that morning, Don Sulpizio foresaw that there would be trouble, he, with the excuse that he felt ill, went home. In his great green bag he carried away with him certain account-books. For in those books might be read so many things, in his own handwriting, which could ruin him; taxes unjustly computed on household fires of poor persons whose doorways were hardly smoky, so small were the little flames of a few twigs; taxes on carts, rickety so that it was by miracle they held together, and the paint so worn you couldn't distinguish the Turks from the Paladins—rated as if it was a question of the fires of the syndic's kitchen, full of every gift of the Lord, and of the carriages of the Palermitan gentry or of the foreigners who sometimes came there to see the place. Whoever had gotten hold of those books would have learned the tricks of Don Sulpizio and certain others of the communal council! He must have had a conscience of leather, Don Sulpizio, for he did not heed

when more than once Father Antonino warned him, "Take care that in that book you don't write your damnation." For the reverend was in awe of nobody, and called bread, bread, even in speaking to the big men of the town.

All the same, Don Sulpizio judged it prudent to carry those books to his house; then, having removed a cask in the cellar, he dug a hole there and buried them, and replaced the cask and even the dirty cobwebs which hung over it in festoons from the damp, musty walls. After which he felt as much relieved as if he had seen an enemy put under ground. He would not burn the books, because, when the troubles should be ended, it might stand him in hand to resurrect those dead. But if anyone had observed him toiling up the steep, broken path that joined the way from the village, instead of taking the highway, it might have been guessed that he was carrying off the books, and the people might take it into their heads to come to sack his house as they had done to the toll-house and to the office of the commune. He had in his ears the sharp cries of the betrothed of Peppi Mosca, "Petroleum, give me petroleum, holy Christians," and there in his house it seemed to him that he heard a subdued crackle of fire among the dry-rotted timbers and the moth-eaten hangings. A rat ran across the room and out of the door.

"The rats are leaving the house because they know that it has to fall," Don Sulpizio said to himself, shivering.

His brother, Don Egidio, infirm of mind and of body, tottered back and forth through the chambers and passages, trying the bolts of the doors and shutters, for he scented some danger. Donna Ninfa sat patching garments as if nothing was the matter, although her brother-in-law had told her of the trouble which was brewing in the town. The servant, Maruzza, with rough hair and bare feet, was muttering prayers in a corner as she cleaned the rice for the dinner.

"Will Garibaldi come?" asked Don Egidio every few minutes. They told him no, no, patiently; while he went on whimpering, "Then what means that smoke down there in the town?" And he cried like a child because he remembered, with what little wit was left him, how the peasants had climbed over the balconies and in at the windows, and had drunk black wine at the table in the great room, in presence of the ancient portraits, shouting, "To the health of Garibaldi."

Donna Ninfa could not remember those times, for she was a baby then. The deceased baron, her husband, had been a half

century older than she. She had been obliged to resign herself to the will of her family that would not have her marry Andrea Cardillo, who had nothing but his epaulets of a second lieutenant, and was not of noble family; instead, they bargained her young beauty for the name and lands of the old Baron Ciminna.



He had been neither better nor worse for her than might have been expected; at his death she had even shed some tears. She remained in the house of the Ciminna; for her parents were no longer living, and looked after the two old brothers-in-law. Don Sulpizio, in order not to lose the power of administering the property settled upon her, kept her close in the house up there on

the mountain, where nobody would come to pay court to her; and he would not even let her go to the town to hear mass, but instead made Father Antonino come to the house to confess her.

"That woman doesn't run away, I'll warrant!" thought Don Sulpizio.

Now he looked at her as she sat mending a coat: "Is it nothing to you, Ninfa, that the peasants may come from minute to minute to sack the house, that you sit there patching?"

"No, it is nothing to me," she answered. And she fitted carefully a square bit of brown fustian to the elbow all in rags.

Maruzza let the rice fall from her apron on the floor. "Madonna, they're coming!"

She ran to the window and Don Egidio went to peer over her shoulder. "Garibaldi is coming," said he.

"Soldiers they are," confirmed Maruzza.

In fact, it was Captain Cardillo with his men, and panting behind them the messenger—who was not sent by Donna Ninfa but by Don Sulpizio, who had on his chest the fear of those account-books. The messenger, however, had not forgotten Andrea Cardillo, nor the pity which had been felt in the town when Donna Ninfa married that old mummy of a Baron Ciminna and the tenentino had vowed that he was leaving the place for ever, he was leaving it! So the entreaty for defense had been made in the name of Donna Ninfa, who, less than others, cared what might happen. When she saw Andrea enter the room she turned very pale and the needle pricked her finger. Don Sulpizio hastened forward, bowing; at the moment he did not recognize the officer, grown from a youth to a strong man during those years since the marriage of Donna Ninfa. Don Sulpizio presented the family: "My brother, the Baron Egidio; our sister-in-law, Donna Ninfa, widow of the good soul of our late brother." Then recognizing the young man, "Holy, big devil," he said within himself, "'tis Andrea Cardillo! Who knows that he doesn't come to save the house and steal the sister-in-law!"

In the moment that Andrea learned that Donna Ninfa was free, a wild hope possessed him. His excitement was extreme. The love for her, so long restrained, now overflowed his being—as when a sudden warmth upon the snow of the mountain-tops fills the dry watercourses, and the streams which before were slender and tranquil, all at once became irresistible torrents. His joy appeared to him superhuman; he loved Ninfa,

and it seemed to him that he must take her to himself at that instant, in presence of the brothers-in-law, of the soldiers, of the servants, and declare: "I love her. She shall be my wife!"

His emotion made itself felt by Ninfa. She was silent, but raised her great, melancholy eyes to his face. Her pathetic glance calmed Andrea; he felt an immense pity for her; it appeared to him that he understood the sordid life which she had been obliged to lead in the house of the Ciminna, while he had at least been free to make his career. Now he would always stay near her; at least, as much as might be conceded to him. He spoke to Don Sulpizio:

"With permission, signor, I will quarter myself and these soldiers here in your house for the defense. I have left a lieutenant to command in the town."

"Thanks, captain, I don't believe it is needful. In fact, they're good people. They would not really harm us, you know. Fire of straw is soon spent. These are things which happen all through Sicily nowadays. Donna Ninfa took alarm. Women are timid, you understand. So, many thanks, but it is not needful."

"The old fox wants to get me out of the house," said the captain to himself; "but I don't take a dismissal from him!"

Don Egidio, who had slipped out of the room, now came creeping back with an empty bottle in each hand. "They will wish to drink the health of Garibaldi," he said in his cracked voice.

Andrea saw how Ninfa, red as a firebrand, bent her head over the rags that she was mending. For a moment he would not make her lift her face; then he said with ceremony: "Command me, signora baronessa. Do you permit me the honor to defend your house?"

"Thanks. It is not needful," Ninfa repeated, oppressed. She laid down the work and stood on her feet; her superb matronly beauty was dearer to Andrea than had been her girlish grace. He swore in his heart a great oath of a soldier that she should be his wife, let happen what would. But he dared not stay, now that she had risen to take leave of him.

"Then I will return to the town," he said quietly, although the blood was boiling in his veins to see Ninfa, his Ninfa, let herself be so commanded by that shuffling old pantaloon of a Don Sulpizio. "But if ever I can be useful to you, pray recall me. Either at the town, or in case we should have been sent

back to Palermo, send word to me at the house of my aunt, Caterina Lobosco, in the via Marmorai, near the piazza Papireto. Remember, signora ! ”

To Ninfa that last phrase, spoken in his beautiful voice, sounded the réveillé of a thousand memories. She assented with her head, silently. Captain Cardillo and his men went away ; Ninfa counted his steps as he descended the broken staircase. Then she seated herself and resumed the mending.

Maruzza, on her knees scraping up the scattered rice from the floor, raised her head to look as the military passed through the door. “ Madonna, what a handsome officer ! ” she said.

“ With monks and soldiers do not make a friendship,” quoted Don Sulpizio. For he thought within himself that the dower of Ninfa, provided that they could keep her a widow in the house, was better than the house itself. Let them burn and sack, and even dig up the books in the cellar, if that were the will of Heaven, he decided. At least that captain, with so much mustache and silver lace—he had sent him about his own business.

All that night Don Sulpizio could not sleep, and moved about the house in his threadbare dressing-gown with a little oil lamp in his hand, looking out of windows, peering down the stairway, to spy if the peasants were coming. He also had leisure to form a plan which would, he hoped, secure to him the dower of Ninfa. She, poor woman, slept ; while Maruzza lay on a straw pallet in a corner of her room. For the first time in many years Donna Ninfa dreamed happily, of she knew not what. The moon only, looking through the narrow, clouded glass of the window, saw her smile.

The next morning as they drank the watery coffee, Don Sulpizio broke forth : “ See here, Ninfa, these are ugly times. For you there’s wanted a husband, a man who would be in the duty of protecting you.”

A sudden flame ran over the throat and face of Ninfa ; it appeared to her to see Andrea Cardillo.

“ It would be also a pleasure,” finished Don Sulpizio, with a toothless smile that wished to be tender. “ In short—I would marry you myself. And the soonest possible. Even to-day. Maruzza, go to tell Simone to take a couple of bottles of wine, of that old sort that he knows, to Father Antonino and beg him to come here this morning.”

"May he come here to bring you the last sacrament, old Turk!" muttered Maruzza, who read in Donna Ninfa's face so many things, one after another. And she said aloud, "Your worship shall be served," adding within herself, "Rather, Simone shall go to the handsome captain—and afterward there may be a wedding with sugarplums!"

The messenger, however, brought back word that the disturbance in the town was quieted, and that the persons arrested had been taken to Palermo under guard of the troops. So that whatever message Maruzza, in her goodwill, had thought best to send, it could not reach Captain Cardillo. But the postmaster had consigned to Simone a letter, saying to him that he must give it into the hands of Donna Ninfa.

As the poor woman read that letter, it appeared to her as if she awaked from a long and heavy sleep. In his writing, Andrea recalled to her the beautiful days when he waited for her near the door of the church, to offer her the holy water, and so have the occasion to touch her fingers; when, in the hours of the night he paced back and forth under her window, the window where she dared not set a lighted candle for fear of the neighbors, but where sometimes the moonlight showed him her face amid flowing black hair that fell over her shoulders, and the white sleeves of her dressing-gown pushed back from her wrists; of when, by a divine chance, they met in the piazza and could exchange a few words, an entreaty from him, a promise from her. Now let them forget the years that had passed, remembering only the happiness that was, and that should be again if she would consent to be his wife. He would soon, as soon as the military duties should allow him a day of leave of absence, come to receive her answer—whatever it might be, she must believe him always her faithful lover, Andrea Cardillo.

Ninfa thrilled with love for Andrea, and with repulsion against Don Sulpizio. If the old man would have kept silent, let her alone, perhaps she would have remained there with him, and Don Egidio in his dotage, and Maruzza dirty but affectionate, and Simone, that did what he could in the house and in the fields, willing as a donkey. But since Don Sulpizio had taken the whim to marry her, she could not stay any longer in that house, she could not stay there! Although Simone had not spoken to the priest that day, he might think it best to obey his master on the morrow. If she could run away to Palermo, to the house of Mistress Caterina Loboeco, an honest woman and

good as bread—there she would be safe. And there she would find Andrea. This was a mad idea. She knew that Don Sulpizio watched her, and there was no escaping. More than once he had told her, "If you go away, Ninfa, you will have to pass through the cathole under the door!"

Yet she began to put together a few little things of hers; the gold ornaments given to her at the time of her marriage by her parents, some jewelled rings, two gold-pieces which had not fallen into the hands of Don Sulpizio. She could not have told why she did this, but it comforted her.

The night came, a dark, moonless night, unnaturally still, as if a storm would soon burst. All were asleep in the house of the barons; Don Sulpizio had watched one night, and that was enough for him; the boors would not come now to dig up those account-books.

All at once there was a loud pounding upon the great door: "Come out, Don Sulpizio!" shouted the crowd. "Let us see your books! Anyhow, we've lighted a candle to read them by!"

Anything but a candle! A red glare lit the courtyard, where there was like a hill of flame. A straw-

stack it was, to which they had set fire, near to the barn. Don Sulpizio, buttoning his dressing-gown about his person, hastened out on the balcony and spoke to the crowd that hooted and whistled at him. Don Egidio went around shaking the bolts and bars in order to assure himself that they were firm. Donna Ninfa and Maruzza, frightened, dressed themselves hastily; the scarlet reflections of the fire colored the light cotton gown of Ninfa. The wailing voice of Don Egidio was heard through



the corridors : "Garibaldi is come! We are ruined! They will rob our property!"

Simone, on the thatch of the barn, amid falling sparks which kindled little flames, was cutting with an axe, while Maruzza ran back and forth carrying jars of water.

Donna Ninfa, left alone in her chamber, heard a door below swing to and fro in the wind, which was arisen strong. A door then was open—if she could escape by it, unseen! She wrapped herself in a large black cloak, in order to cover her light dress, and descended the crooked stairway. The wind shut the door with a loud noise; she ran to it and pulled it open, with force, upon its stiff, rusty hinges. A cool breeze blew about her—that was the air of liberty! She glanced around with fear; the crowd was gathered in the courtyard before the house. They appeared like fantastic shadows, moving, gesticulating against a fiery background. An enormous column of reddish smoke arose to the sky; the atmosphere was become acrid and suffocating. No one took thought of Ninfa; all were occupied with saving the property. She clasped unconsciously her little package of precious things. "To Andrea, to Andrea!" she said aloud; and the sound of his name gave her courage.

She turned away from the sinister light of the burning, and took the narrow, difficult path that led to the village. To her eyes, dazzled by the fire, the darkness between the trees appeared like a solid obstacle. But she went forward, repeating, "To Andrea, Andrea!"

In after days, when the captain holding his wife in his arms would question her as to the vicissitudes of that strange night, Ninfa could not tell how it was that, stumbling over rocks and roots of trees, her gown caught by briers, her little embroidered shoes cut by sharp stones, at last she had reached the street of the village. The tempest which had threatened burst like a waterspout, with thunder and lightning, so that the earth appeared to tremble. Ninfa remembered that she had stood on the level in front of the church, half blinded by the frequent flashes and by the rain that was a deluge. Then she perceived a solitary light in a window, and toward it she directed her steps. She had to knock more than once before she could make herself heard. An old man opened the door; he had an honest and kind countenance.

"Give me a little shelter, good man," Donna Ninfa begged him.

He made a profound bow, inviting her to enter: "Mistress, blessed, honor my house," he said to her. Then he crossed a few twigs of lemon-wood on the hearthstone and kindled a little flame in order that she might dry her clothing. Donna Ninfa, who shivered with chill and with excitement, seated herself in a low chair before the fire; she drew back her skirts to warm her small feet in the gold-wrought shoes soaked with rain.

The old man—he was no other than Daddy Cheli Deda—busied himself drawing the rickety table near to the signora, placing upon it a loaf and a pitcher of wine. He appeared as though under an enchantment; he spoke to her in a submissive voice, as if to a queen:

"Beautiful signora, what do you command? A bit of bread, some drops of wine?" And he served her with the greatest respect, even kneeling to kiss the hem of her cloak.

Meanwhile, the tempest had ceased, its fury was soon spent. Through the little, smoke-dimmed pane of glass set in the door could be seen the white splendor of the moon, reappeared over the mountain.

"A pity," said Daddy Cheli, "that my wife is away, called to assist a sick woman. If not, she would have known better than I how to serve your ladyship. At least, there's the bed, made up clean; they're coarse, the sheets, but my woman spun, wove, and hemmed them as she could. Accommodate yourself, signora, and sleep in holy peace, for I will guard the door like a dog."

And, without delay, Daddy Cheli went out of the house, closing the door behind him. He—who cared nothing for wet or dry, so much of both he had experienced in his time—stretched himself across the door-stone; and there he slept, snoring like an old watch-dog, as he had called himself.

If Donna Ninfa, lying on the rustic trestle-bed with its clean linen, slept little, at least her tired body enjoyed repose, while her thoughts mingled with dreams to picture the happiness of a future shared with Andrea Cardillo. Lulled by these imaginings, she felt less impatience for the dawn, when she would resume the way that led to Palermo, a very few kilometers distant. It appeared to her to see amid the darkness of the room the road to Palermo, as she remembered it when, before the marriage with the baron, she had visited the city with her parents. That was before the division from their neighbors, the family of Andrea Cardillo; and they had even gone to the house of his aunt Caterina Lobosco. Ninfa recalled how the worthy

woman had praised Andrea, with certain glances at the girl, and how sweet those praises had sounded to her.

It seemed to her to traverse the whole way, turning into the Corso Calatafimi, past the secular olive-trees called the Saracens, twisted and misshapen so that they are all one with the gray stone walls through which they grow; along the gentle descent to the Porta Nuova with its carven giants; under the archway



of the cathedral spanning the street; and so to the hilly piazza of the Papireto, thickly dotted with aloe plants—then to the right the street of the Marmorai, and the house of Mistress Caterina Lobosco. And there would be Andrea!

Ninfa had fallen into a light slumber; when she opened her eyes she saw the earliest whiteness of the dawn. She arose, passed her hands over her ruffled hair, put on her cloak, and noiselessly opened the door. The old man lay on the step,

sound asleep. Donna Ninfa passed by him with care, not to disturb his repose.

"May you be blessed, good old man!" she murmured, placing near his hand the two gold-pieces, all that she had.

So she went away, along the road to Palermo, while the morning star was yet in the heavens, and the dawn brightened over the semi-circle of the Golden Shell, and the sea took color from the sky, and the great city, still asleep, lay enfolded in a pearly mist, with tints of azure and of rose.

"To Andrea!" said Ninfa in her heart, and went on her way rejoicing.

Hardly inferior, however, was the triumph of Daddy Cheli. There was no longer any gainsaying him—for he had seen and received in his house one of the Ladies of Night, in person.

When his wife came home, he told her of the extraordinary event, showing her the gold-pieces and the print of the small shoes in the mud near the door.

Then he posted himself on the doorstep, with his hands in his pockets to indicate that that day he would keep holiday, and didn't mean to work—for money he had, what the deuce!

As the neighbors came by, with spades on their shoulders, or driving a flock of goats, he stopped them in order that they might hear and admire the story of the visit of the Lady of Night. Moreover, he told how, going that morning to see his cherished toad, he had found her flattened and dead under the stones of her grotto, which had been dislodged by the heavy rain. So that it was evident that the signora—blessed where she is and where she inhabits!—had been forced to resume her own form, of a noble and beautiful matron; and to this chance was due the honor of her visit to his house. He had taken pityingly in his hand the body of the toad and made his excuses to it.

"'Twas not I who killed you, poor little botta. Do not curse me, for I am a son of Mary! And seven years of ill-luck, I haven't merited them nor I don't wish for them."

However, everybody assured him that it was on purpose to let him know that she was not angry, but, on the contrary, grateful to him that the signora had wished to pay him a visit. Proof of that were the pieces of gold. Even Uncle 'Nzulu Malvedda recanted his heresies concerning the Ladies of Night, because we cannot contradict that which an honest man has seen with his eyes.

And as if Heaven itself willed that the simple beliefs of Daddy Cheli and his friends should remain undisturbed, nothing ever became known, in the town or in the village, about the flight of Donna Ninfa ; because, for family pride, Don Sulpizio—who, by the way, had gotten out of the ugly affair of the account-books better than might have been expected, for after all, he was a Ciminna and the people would not have it too much against him—preferred to give to be understood that it was with his full approval that his sister-in-law was married to that brave Captain Cardillo, who had made such a fine defense of the authorities of his native place, and merited a reward, he merited it!

Simone and Maruzza would say only what their master put into their mouths. Don Egidio was pleased as a child to mumble the wedding sugarplums which Ninfa had sent to him from Palermo.

And—as every story-teller of Sicily must say in conclusion—the bride and bridegroom “remained happy and content, and here are we left with nothing!”

Except—it is to be hoped—a sound faith in our Ladies and Mistresses, blessed where they are and where they inhabit! If any skeptics still exist, they are warmly recommended to go to talk about the matter with Daddy Cheli Deda.



THE GENTLEMAN OPPOSITE*

BY E. CHILTON



THE road was dusty; but the bank was green. Robin lay back, his fair curls streaming over the grass, one hand full of cuckoo flowers and red campion, the other plucking at the tall blades which sprang around—his bright gaze resting upon a spray of wild roses above his head, while he balanced his chances of reaching or not reaching the same, should he summon energy to clamber so far as the hedge.

Suddenly he was startled by melodious laughter. A lady stood in the road, bending towards him across the narrow ditch.

"Little Lad! Little Lad!" she cried joyously; and laughed again. Robin stared in solemn silence.

Was she old or young? Her hair under her brown shady hat, which was tied with ribbons, had gleams of faded yellow; her cheeks were minutely wrinkled here and there, but pink and very soft; her eyes were blue—shining like big blue stars, Robin thought. He had never before seen any face so wild and strange. But he was not afraid. She looked at him, smiling and nodding, as if they had been friends long ago.

"Just as I always said!" she exclaimed, her voice musical like her laugh. "There is no such thing—no such thing as death! Why, you seem none the worse, Little Lad—you're not even wet!" She stretched forward and felt Robin's holland blouse. "But where did you go when we lost sight of you under the water, my Little Lad?"

And now Robin did feel fear. Those bright eyes were so very bright. He scrambled to his feet.

A wall, long and high, skirted the other side of the road. As Robin rose, the lady's attention was distracted. A white pigeon flew from over this wall to the roof of a little red-brick house which faced it; and perched upon the slates.

"Do you see that?" whispered the lady, pointing. "I can

* A selection from "Longman's Magazine."

guess what it is—a Bird of Paradise. There's a blessing on that house."

"It's my house," said Robin, retreating up the bank.

"And who lives *there*!" asked the lady, waving her hand towards the wall.

"The Gentleman Opposite lives there," returned Robin, succinctly. "The milkman told Clara his name; but she forgets."

The lady went on a few paces, regarded the wall intently, and turned back.

"You can't trust milkmen," she confidentially remarked; "they water the milk. But I've proved you of old, Little Lad. Come half a step nearer."

She looked, despite her wildness, so kind and sweet that Robin's fears subsided. He descended to his former post.

"The milkman knows nothing about it," said the lady, whispering again. "A ghost lives there. You don't forget—? But perhaps the water affected your memory. Never mind. The person behind that wall is a ghost. He came out of the great gates last—last—was it last Tuesday? . . . That accounts for the bird," she added suddenly aloud. "It followed him, no doubt."

At this moment, in a distant angle of the road, appeared two female figures—one tall, one short and sturdy—running, as if alarmed. The lady glanced towards them, and laughed as at first, observing in a casual undertone:

"Poor, kind creatures! They can't bear me out of their sight. Don't excite yourselves, pray," she cried, with unexpected shrillness; "you'll both have fits, running in this heat. Good-by, my Little Lad."

She blew a kiss over her shoulder to Robin, and tripped, youthfully agile, to join the strangers.

The child watched until the trio had vanished along the winding road—the lady between her companions, giving each, apparently, an arm.

Robin knew that the gray wall guarded a beautiful old house, a striking contrast to his father's brick cottage. From an upper window of that cottage he had seen its richly-carved gables, its long oaken porch, also carved, and shaded by flowering trees; moreover, in the distance, among its grounds, an avenue of heavy black cedars, and sometimes, under those cedars, a tall figure walking to and fro—advancing, as from far gloom, and thither retreating, shortly, in like manner, to reappear.

"It's the Gentleman," Clara, the maid-of-all-work, had asserted. "He's scarce ever found outside them gates; for all that the land, so far 's we sees, belongs to him, except the bit this 'ouse stands on, as were bound by a lease. This 'ouse were built to spite him, the milkman says."

"Mammy, how can our house spite the Gentleman Opposite?" inquired Robin, after private meditation.

But Robin's mother was ill and heavy-laden, and she made him no answer, only turning on her pillow with closed eyes, that he might not see her tears.

Now, after his interview with the lady, his curiosity was beyond control. He scrambled back into the road and stared about him. At his left, some half-mile distant, a dense cloud blackened the sky—a cloud of smoke from the great manufacturing town whence, with his parents and Clara, he had flitted a month before. To his right stretched green fields, amid which only one house was visible—large and white, with many windows glaring from the slope of a low hill.

His mother's blind flapped dreamily. She was asleep, he knew. His father was in the town, Clara occupied in regions unseen. His heart beat faster than ever before; but his adventurous instincts were strong. He pushed with all his might at the heavy gates in the wall. The hasps were unfastened; the iron hinges creaked; the portal moved with slow dignity. Directly the aperture would admit his slim little form, he found himself in the kingdom of the ghost.

"But I'm not afraid of ghosts," said Robin aloud. "They can't hurt. And I must see if it's true."

How strange his little voice sounded! Despite his bold words, Robin's heart thumped yet more loudly. He stole on tiptoe round the sweep of the drive. Here, close upon him, the old house stretched long and low; the carved faces looking from the eaves, the deep porch leading far inward to a massive door.

His red-brick home and the hot road might have been miles away. It was very silent here, shady and cool. Robin passed the porch and went on round the end of the house. Now green lawns began, fragrant with flowers. An exquisite garden stretched to a stone balustrade. Three steps led down to fair paths among rose bowers. Beyond lay the cedar avenue, its branches in black relief against the blue June sky. Overlooking all, stood another long low front, and more carved faces met Robin's startled eyes.

Half way a glass door opened upon the turf. The boy, stealthily approaching, peeped in.

He saw a room, also long and low, with a ceiling carved like the gables, carved book-cases covering the walls in every direction save one. At a table laden with huge volumes, with papers under weights of varied forms, with miniatures on standing frames, with crests and coats-of-arms on red sealing-wax, with military medals and gorgets, sat a tall old gentleman, writing very intently: his figure erect and spare, his fingers—conspicuous upon his nimble pen—long and bony, his hair white and smooth, his eyes black and brilliant; his dress, including a swallow-tailed coat, precise in the extreme.

Robin remembered a terrible ballad about a ghost with a cork leg, which was always running, running. Might there not just as well be a ghost with a pen, obliged to write, write, write? And what face was this, gazing from a large gilt frame which filled the one space unoccupied by book-shelves? The child felt himself in a world of enchantment. He stole nearer; his shadow fell across the sheet of foolscap.

"Hallo!" said the old gentleman, dropping his pen. His black eyes opened widely. "Good heavens, what a likeness!" he exclaimed.

"Are you—are you—a—I shan't be frightened," said Robin, with a struggle.

"Come in, my little fellow. What do you want?" asked the gentleman, recovering his self-control.

The child stepped through the open doorway, nothing loth.

"It's not true," he said; "you're nothing but a man."

The old gentleman laughed heartily.

"Come here, my funny little chap," he said, holding out his hand. "I almost thought at first—— But there's no fool like an old fool! What is your name, my boy?"

"My name's Robin Savile," returned the child, advancing, his flapping hat pressed nervously to his back, his fair curls flowing over his blouse.

The old gentleman flushed a deep red.

"How remarkable! How exceedingly remarkable! And who is your father, my little man?"

"My father's the curate of St. Chad's. We've left the town, because mammy's ill. The doctor said she would die without fresh air; so father walks there and back every day. Father's a vicar in our real home, only that is ever so far away. The

bishop let us come here because we're so poor, and father thought we could save money. But I don't believe it, and Clara doesn't; and mammy cries nearly all day."

It was a long speech, but at each pause Robin was encouraged by some sign or sound of interest.

"Ah! . . . That's all very sad, my little fellow. Does your mother care for strawberries? But where do you live, by the bye?"

"We live"—Robin hesitated, apologetically—"we didn't know when we came. We live at the little house opposite. We didn't know it was built to spite you, till the milkman told us."

"The milkman told you that, did he?" said the old gentleman, looking very angry. "The saucy jackanapes! Tell him he ought to be ashamed of himself," he added irascibly. "And your name's Robin Savile? The Robin Savile I knew was just your height, and you are his living image. I must call on your father. Or, stay—I never make calls. Will you ask him if he had a brother—or no—a cousin, perhaps—or an uncle, of your name, who was drowned in a boating expedition? Just at your age—or so I should fancy."

"I'm seven," said Robin. Then he looked up at the great picture.

"She talked as if I'd been drowned," he murmured, musing. "Are you a soldier?" he added, with a sudden change of demeanor, as his eyes met the bright hues of regimental colors in a MS. open on the table.

"I was a soldier once."

The old gentleman paused abruptly.

"I'm writing a history of my regiment, my little man. I've been at it, more or less, since I stopped soldiering. It keeps me busy, as you see. I intersperse with it biographical details. Here are the officers' crests, ancestral portraits, and so forth. You shall come again and see them. Just now you must help me to find a few strawberries for your mother. It was a splendid regiment—the 17th Lancers. You'll read about it in history, my boy."

"Father told me. The Charge of the Light Brigade! I learned the verses. Did you know any of the Six Hundred?"

"I was one of them," said the old gentleman proudly. "I rode in the Charge."

Robin stared, dumb with admiration.

"Perhaps that was why she took you for a ghost," he said, as

his kind friend led him over the grass. "She fancied you'd been killed."

"And, pray, who took me for a ghost?" asked the old gentleman, half amused, half annoyed:

"You know her. You've got her picture. I saw who it was, directly. Only in the picture she's rounder and she's got no wrinkles. But her eyes are just as blue."

The old gentleman stood still.

"Of what lady are you speaking?" said he.

"The lady in the great picture, where you sat. Though in the picture she's a girl. I don't know her name; but I saw her, this afternoon, in the road. That's why I came—she told me a ghost lived here. She meant you. She's very kind, but so funny! She thought she knew me. She called me Little Lad."

"Little Lad! Yes, that was his pet name. She recognized, then—she remembered! And you saw her this afternoon?"

The old gentleman had forgotten the strawberries. He dropped the child's hand.

"A ghost! Only a ghost!" he muttered, and went rapidly down the steps to the cedar avenue; and there walked to and fro as was his custom, his white head bowed upon his breast.

"So Robin pays calls!" said Mrs. Savile, faintly smiling. She lay propped up with pillows, her young face thin and worn, but happier than in the afternoon, because now her husband had finished his long day's work in the black city, and was resting at her bedside.

"Did I never tell you, dear, that I was christened Robert after a little uncle drowned ten years before my birth? I remember now," Mr. Savile added, musingly, "my mother's calling me Robin, and my father's forbidding it on account of the painful associations. The great shock was still vivid, he said, in my grandmother's mind. So then I degenerated into Bob."

"You were Robert only and always to me," said his wife—"*Robert, toi que j'aime!*" But how curious that I should have hit upon Robin to specialize this child, knowing nothing of his predecessor!"

"Ma'am," said Clara, precipitately entering, "please to look at this here beautiful basket. The piles of strawberries!—red 'uns and white 'uns. And I never see such roses! There's asparagus, ma'am, underneath, and young green peas."

"I know! I know!" cried Robin, capering.

"From the Gentleman Opposite, ma'am, with his respectful compliments, hoping as you'll pardon the liberty, and will Master Robin take back the basket at his convenience? Mr. Belton, the butler, left that message. A pompous piece! He wouldn't wait for thanks. He said as, if you sent 'em, he dursn't give 'em. His master, he said, would thank you, ma'am, for condescending to accept such trifles."

"Robert, these roses are heavenly!" cried Mrs. Savile, burying her tired face in the mass of fragrance.

"I shall thank him myself," said the curate, starting up.

But he reappeared with tidings of No Admittance. The servant described by Clara had explained, majestically courteous, that his master never received visitors.

"It's all according to what the milkman said," remarked Clara in the kitchen. "He can't bear no one a-nigh him."

"You mustn't trust milkmen," quoted Robin oracularly; "they water the milk."

"This 'un don't, then," replied Clara with tartness. "He's a most respectable young fellow. Our landlord—that's his master, Mr. Cudds, as owns the cows—wanted to run up a shed on some waste ground beyond the Gentleman's garden. It 'ud be handy for Mr. Cudds's big meadow, and there's a spring convenient for the cows—the cows, not the milk," she added sharply. "But no, the old gentleman wouldn't hear on it, though the bit o' land's too rough to be cultivated. So Mr. Cudds run up this 'ouse instead, facing his front gates."

"Out of spite," said Robin, quoting again.

"Mr. Cudds is sorry now, the milkman says. But him and the Gentleman had had words. The Gentleman's uncommon hasty. And yet, that generous! A cart calls for broken meats regular, to be gave away in the town. It's queer he should set such store by a bit o' waste—that rough, and at the back of his kitchen garden."

Robin heard this recital with much interest, and, the following afternoon, set forth again, secretly resolved on further investigation. Once more, making his way round the house, he peeped in upon the long room. A quill pen in the open inkpot looked fresh from its master's hand, but the master was not there. The child's spirit of adventure burned within him. He crossed the lawn and jumped down the steps of the terrace.

Presently he was in the cedar avenue. The dark boughs crossed overhead, with contrasting gleams of sky. Below was a

silent cloister. He had gone some way in the stillness, when—yet several yards distant—he saw the peaked roof of a summer-house—little needed, apparently, in this sequestered spot. Farther, the mellow wall of the kitchen garden was visible, and beyond, an irregular patch instantly recognized by sharp Robin as the waste ground desired of Mr. Cudds. It rose towards a meadow, here bounding the precincts of the white house so prominent from the road. A hilly garden, not thence visible, was now conspicuous, with female figures dotted over the grass. Lower, nearer the meadow, three together walked up and down, up and down.

Robin watched them with a curious fascination; but soon his mind recurred to the summer-house. His courage faltered: what strange wood-gnome might burst forth and confront him? But he remembered the Six Hundred, thinking, with shame, how the old gentleman, who was one of them, would despise him! He clenched his little fist to hold fast his fortitude, and went forward through the shadows.

The door was open. One very small window, a mere porthole, was open likewise. Pointed towards this porthole stood a telescope, and behind the stand, absorbed in some private scrutiny, sat the Gentleman Opposite.

His sharp elbows rested on his knees; his hands were clasped with the resolution which had prompted Robin's clenched fist, as if he too must hold fast fortitude. Their great veins showed in prominent knots. Presently Robin heard a long groan. The old gentleman leaned back and pressed his handkerchief to his eyes. The telescope had tired them, thought the boy.

"May I have just one peep?" he said, advancing. "You told me to call again."

The old gentleman removed the handkerchief and stared at Robin. His black eyes looked dimmer than yesterday.

"You are a cool hand, little chap! Good heavens, how you carry me back! Wait, while I alter the focus. Is that right? Yes, look. Do you recognize anyone?"

Robin gazed from between the old gentleman's knees, down the black muzzle, to the porthole.

"What do you see?"

The hand regulating the focus trembled.

"I see green—and now black—it's a tennis-net. Oh!" the child shouted with glee. "I saw the ball fly. How those ladies are jumping! Now it's all green again—sloping. There's a

path—a quiet path—under the lawn. I see three people by themselves. They're coming nearer. One's tall and one's short, and the middle one—Oh!" cried the child again.

"Go on," said the old gentleman hoarsely.

"She's the Lady—the lady in the road—or in your picture. But they're the same, only the little wrinkles don't show here. She's talking—she's looking at me, and smiling. She's looking at me, though she can't see me."

"Looking, yet never seeing," echoed the hoarse voice.

The old gentleman started to his feet.

"They've gone on now. There's only green left," said the boy.

The old gentleman covered the telescope and closed the port-hole. The little shutter closed with it. The summer-house was in darkness.

"Come out. You shall see my treasures, as I promised," said the old gentleman, taking the child's hand. They stepped back into the cedar avenue; and he locked the door. Beyond, above the meadow, the female figures were still flitting to and fro.

"Does she live at that white house?" asked Robin. "Are those people her sisters?"

"Come on. Come back to the library," said the old gentleman, quickly turning.

Two or three times weekly a heavy basket was now delivered at the brick cottage, with always the same message—respectful compliments from the Gentleman Opposite, and would Mrs. Savile pardon the liberty?

The basket was invariably returned by Robin, in whose visits the old gentleman found strange pleasure. He asked testily, if more than a day divided them, where Robin had been? He hunted out quaint pictures for the child's amusement, allowed him to rummage through ancient cabinets, and explore the unused rooms and long passages of the rambling house; to sit, moreover, beside himself in a high chair disinterred from an attic, and watch in silent admiration while he sketched and illuminated in embellishment of his slowly-progressing work, the *History of the 17th Lancers*.

"Were you a field-marshal with a cocked hat? Father couldn't find your name among the officers. I thought the reason might be that field officers are above common officers," said Robin, looking wise.

"The real reason is exactly the reverse," replied the gentleman, coloring a magnificent crest enshrined in a shield of gold. "I was a private."

Robin stared.

"Clara's brother is a private. He saluted me," the child said, meditatively.

"I had been an officer before—a cornet—for a short time," said the old gentleman; "but I sold out, owing to family misfortunes, before I was twenty. Then, years afterwards, I was in trouble and very angry—with myself even more than with others; and the Crimean War had just begun, so I enlisted."

"And the Queen gave you a medal and a clasp," cried Robin, with enthusiasm.

"That was later," said the old gentleman, "when the war was over and we came home. And what do you think I found? Fifty thousand pounds waiting in the bank for me! Some relations had died and left me a rich man. I felt tired of soldiering, and bought myself off and settled here. And here I have been ever since."

"I wish my father could find money in the bank! I expect mammy 'll die before long, if we don't get any," remarked Robin, confidentially. "She'll be happier then, so I mustn't cry, she says. If she died, I'd enlist, like you. Perhaps they'd make me a drummer-boy. Wasn't it very nice, though, to get rich all of a sudden?"

The old gentleman laid down his brush and sat back in his straight chair.

Then, as often, taking Robin by surprise—he rose.

"Come out and find some fruit for your mother," he said. "How's her appetite, my boy? Does she care at all for ducklings, when they're tender? Her strength must be kept up."

"It came too late, boy," he murmured, dreamily, leading the child away. "Too late."

"Little Lad!" said a voice which Robin recognized next day as he pushed at the iron portal. Behind him stood the lady! with the same blue, wild eyes, full of smiles.

"That's right, Little Lad! Ghosts are lonely. I see you often going in and out. But tell me," and she looked down upon the child, her smiles replaced by a strange intensity, "is he really a ghost? Was I mistaken? I dream sometimes. Is he a ghost after all?"

Before Robin could answer she bent lower.

"Will you take him a message," she asked, "from me?"

The boy, magnetized, bowed his head.

"From Ruth," said she: "'*Did you love Isabel?*' That's all. Four words. From Ruth, tell him. There they come!" She looked over her shoulder. Two figures—one tall, one short—were approaching in swift pursuit.

"When we meet again, give me his answer. I'll manage it. I'll be on the watch. '*Did you love Isabel?*' Only that."

"Don't distress yourselves, pray don't," she cried in quite a different tone to her companions. "I am perfectly safe. This young gentleman is quite able to protect me."

She waved her hand with stately grace toward Robin, who, half-frightened, made haste to disappear.

The old gentleman was in the cedar avenue.

"I've got a message for you. From Ruth," said the boy.

The old gentleman stood still. The color vanished from his cheeks, his chin, almost from his lips. His black eyes gazed like two dark-globed lamps upon Robin.

"It was the Lady. I saw her in the road again. 'From Ruth,' she said. '*Did you love Isabel?*' That was all. I am to give her your answer."

"I will give it myself."

He strode forward.

"Stop! Please stop," cried the child. "They took her away. Those people—the tall one and the short one. Her sisters, are they?"

It seemed to Robin that the old gentleman shivered. The summer-house was close by. He turned in at the open door and sat down among the shadows.

"I shall see her again," said Robin. "*Did you love Isabel?*" he mechanically repeated. "What shall I tell her?"

"Tell her No!" shouted the old gentleman, with sudden emphasis. "Tell her I was mad and a fool. Tell her that I have waited here to explain to her for five-and-thirty years—five-and-thirty years."

He stopped suddenly, folding his arms.

"Yes? I'll remember," said Robin, expecting more.

"Never mind," the old gentleman murmured, now only just audible. "She couldn't—understand. But—*Did I love Isabel?* Tell her No, boy," the emphasis returning; "tell her No, No, No!"

Robin's mother was still crying when the child went home.

For awhile his little heart felt ready to break. But when, discovering this, she made an effort, dried her tears, and proposed in her weak voice a game of "Reversi," he was quickly happy once more.

His anxieties, however, revived when the evening post brought a letter in a blue envelope—always blue envelopes!—for his father, just returned from the town. Mr. Savile was strong and muscular, and hitherto—by such self-control as Robin could not conceive—he had seemed outwardly cheerful. But now, having read this letter, he sank into a chair, rested his head upon his hand, and groaned aloud.

"Are you getting ill, too, father?" asked poor Robin timidly.

Mr. Savile looked up, strangely haggard.

"I did not see you, Robin. Run away, my boy. Run out and play in the garden."

"If you please, sir, the mistress heard the postman," said Clara at the door.

"I will come to her in a moment," said Mr. Savile.

As the girl retired, he fell upon his knees.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" he moaned, half unconsciously, echoing the sacred words.

Robin stole away, bewildered and alarmed.

The "garden" was only a grass plat, with a path and a border; but it was better, he thought, than the house. The long summer day was closing; a red sunset brightened the sky beyond the meadows. Elsewhere, the light was softening; already a faint star twinkled above the gables of the Gentleman Opposite. Mr. Cudds had planted the border with white stocks. Their fragrance seemed to blend with the calm. The child stooped to inhale it.

"Little Lad! Little Lad!" said a voice just above a whisper.

The lady stood beside the wicket-gate. Her cheeks burned like two deeply-hued carnations. She stretched out her hand and beckoned.

"Quick! I've not a moment. They'll miss me. I told you I'd manage it. What did he say, Little Lad? What did he say?"

"Little Lad was my great-uncle," said Robin, musingly. "I've found out that." For the moment he had forgotten his message.

"Did you ask him? Did you ask him if he loved Isabel?"

pursued the lady in wild agitation. With one hand she drew Robin nearer; the other she pressed to her side.

"Yes, I asked him. And he said, 'No, No, No.' He said he had been mad and a fool. He said, 'Tell her No, No, No,' " repeated Robin, the scene reviving.

"Ah!" said the lady.

She pressed her hand more tightly to her side.

"That was my soul," she said. "It fluttered, and spread its wings. Yes, I felt them. I must see him. I must see him!" she cried.

She looked hurriedly behind her. The many windows of the white house burned like fires in the sunset. But the road lay empty and still.

"They've not found out yet. But they will soon. Little Lad, there's not a moment."

She opened the small gate and pulled him through.

"Take me to him now, at once," she said. "You took me that day—you led me with your hot little hand; you said he wanted me; you led me down to the river, where the boats were waiting under the weeping ash. We left you behind on the bank; we rowed away, away, he and I, and I never saw your little bright face again. Why did you go in the large boat with the others? We looked round, and it was upset, and you were lost. But no—he jumped out to save you. Yes, I remember. Has he hidden you all this time? But come! come!"

They were skirting the silent old house; they had reached the lawn. At some distance the old gentleman was strolling among his standard rose-trees.

The lady stopped short.

"Go to him, Little Lad," she whispered. "Say, 'Here she is; I've brought her.' That was what you said before, you know, under the weeping ash."

Robin ran across the soft turf. His hero stood unconscious, his back towards them, inspecting a rose lately budded. The boy lightly touched the long hand.

"Here she is. I've brought her," he repeated.

The soldierly figure turned.

"Hector!" cried the lady.

She looked young and light, like a girl. She came swiftly over the grass.

The old gentleman said not a word. But a soul of long ago, old no more, awakened, and leaped into his black eyes.

"Hector, you never said good-by. They told me you were gone. But I was watching. Why did you never come to say good-by?"

A wild agony passed like a spasm across the strong, withered face. The lips moved as if to speak. But they uttered no sound.

"Ah, you're sorry!" said the lady. "Yes, I can see it." Her tone softened to an ineffable tenderness; her eyes shone and smiled.

"I knew all the time that you would be sorry—afterwards. Yes, afterwards."

She paused and held out her hands.

Quick steps resounded upon the gravel beyond the house.

"Which way?" cried a harsh voice.

"Ah, they've missed me at last!" she said; and her hands fell.

The old gentleman strode forward.

"Ruth!" he cried. "Oh, I am not worthy! But—but——"

"Never mind," she said, smiling again, as the hurried steps drew nearer. "I had a great deal to ask you, Hector."

She stopped suddenly, looking up at the sky. The soft radiance seemed reflected in her eyes. She went on smiling:

"But you shall tell me all about it THERE," she said, pointing straight above her; "There—There—There!"

Her voice was quite clear and calm, like that to which she pointed. But another instant, and a clamor of alarm, reproach, apology, had surrounded the little group. Robin's old acquaintances—tall and short—were leading the lady away. Or, as before, it appeared as though she led them: giving to each an arm, walking speedily, and not once looking back.

"Hush!" said Clara.

The maid-of-all-work leaned, beside Robin, from an upper window. A funeral was passing in the road.

"Speak in a whisper, Master Robin—they'll think you unfeeling. She was a mad lady from the white house up yonder. It's a private madhouse. They have their milk from Mr. Cudds. There was no lack of money, anyhow. Just see how respectable! An open hearse, and, lor, what beautiful flowers! Poor lady! she'd been there nigh a lifetime. At first she was downright distracted—tried to kill herself ever so many times. Mr. Cudds's sister was her keeper. She'd sit without speaking for

days, and then jump up and dash her head against the wall. But of late she's been as quiet as a lamb and quite harmless. She was harmless always, to every one but herself, the milkman says."

The minute-bell tolled.

"I hope that won't wake the mistress," whispered Clara. "There's the chief mourner by himself in that first carriage. Master Robin! it's the Gentleman Opposite."

So it was. In deep mourning, a rigid figure, all alone, sat Robin's old friend, following the coffin.

"Perhaps she was his sister," said Robin.

"It's well, any way, she had him. For, look, there's only one carriage more; and them in it is just the doctor and Lawyer Giles and the two keepers—one's tall and one's short. Not a soul else. Poor thing! Well, she'd been as good as dead, ever such a while. And yet, the milkman says, she was a sweet lady, and a favorite with 'em all, patients and servants, up at the house there."

In the evening Robin visited the old gentleman. Exactly a week had passed since that strange interview in the garden. The child had called every day, but had not again seen his old friend. But this evening he found him seated in his straightbacked chair facing the picture. The inkstand was closed; the quill pens stood dry in their holes; the *History of the 17th Lancers* lay unopened below its bronze weight. Only a small roll of paper, yellow from age, lay idle in the bony old hand.

"Well, my little man!" said he with a faint smile. "I had thought of sending for you. Come and sit down by me."

"Was it—the Lady?" asked Robin suddenly.

He looked up at the smiling picture. His eyes slowly filled; his lip quivered.

"You're sorry, then?" said his friend. "But never mind. She had suffered very much while she was here. I am going to tell you about it. I will tell you for a warning to yourself when your own time comes, my little lad. She's with the real Little Lad now."

"How came she to know him?" inquired Robin, consoled in anticipation of a story.

"When that was painted"—the old gentleman pointed to the picture—"his family and hers were great friends. One summer she went on a long visit to the Saviles—your great-grandparents and their children—while her own parents were abroad. There

happened to be a young tutor also staying in the house, coaching the elder boys for an examination. He sometime taught Little Lad too, and Little Lad was devoted to her. They were often brought together, she and he, through their dealings with Little Lad."

"Did you know the young tutor? Was he nice?"

"I knew him—too well, my little chap. He seemed nice to Little Lad and to her; but he had great faults. He was hot-tempered and impatient, like a warhorse only half-broken. But in those summer days his faults did not appear. It was such a beautiful summer! and they grew to love each other very much, that young tutor and——." He pointed again, in silence.

"But the ending of that blessed time was a type of what came after. It ended in Little Lad's death. The young tutor got him out of the water, but the little life was quenched. Then the gay party broke up; the poor parents were half distracted, and—she—went home to her relations. She was rich, and the young tutor was poor. He followed her, and asked her father to let him marry her, but her father refused."

"What happened next?" asked Robin, as the old man paused. The black eyes, no longer dim, were fixed, as if they saw past times upon the picture.

"Just at first they did not much mind. The young tutor resolved to work hard and win her; and she told him that she would never forget him, but wait for him all her life if need were. But he said that she should only wait two years. They parted, and in two years he came back. He had prospered, and was in a fair way to prosper more. But her father was very proud, and still he said No. So the young tutor went away for another year."

"I think he was not impatient at all," said Robin.

"Ah! Wait a bit, my boy. At the end of the next year he came again, and still the father said No. So then the young tutor begged her to disobey her father and be married away from her home. But she would not. Because she was very good. She was like an angel. And though she loved him—better than her life, she said—she could not, even for him, do wrong. It would be wrong, she felt, to disobey her father and break her mother's heart."

"Was the young tutor angry with her?"

"He waited one more year. That was four years from the time he came first. And then he got very angry. He managed to see her, and he told her that she did not care for him, and a

great deal more, and refused to believe what she said. It was only pretence. She knows now, my boy, that it was only pretence. Then some work turned up for him near her home. She had to meet him constantly; and all the while she was so miserable—her father and mother pulling one way and he another—that she wondered why her heart did not break. She told him so many a time, but he would not heed her. And then there came another girl—a girl of another kind altogether—who took a fancy to the young tutor, and was always putting herself in his way. And he had yielded to his passions, my little man, till the devil entered into him; and because Ruth, in her holiness and goodness, tormented him, he resolved to torment her. So he pretended now to love the other girl, and took care that Ruth should see it and hear of it, and—and——. But you are only a child. I am in my dotage to talk of such things to you."

"Oh, do, do, go on!" cried Robin.

"Then, almost without knowing it—he wouldn't stop to think calmly—he found himself engaged to the other one. Engaged to be married, my boy; and the day after he would have given worlds to undo it. But there he was, and the news spread quickly, and Ruth was told; and she had to meet them in society—him and—the other always near him. But he did not know, boy—to do him justice—he did not know what that sight was working in her. Then months went on and the other girl began to wonder why he fixed no time for the marriage; and at last she showed him this very plainly, and somehow—though he tried still to pretend—she found out that he had never cared for her. And just then some one better worth having turned up, and she ran away and married him instead, and left the young tutor free."

"So then did he go back to poor Ruth?"

"There his pride came in, my boy. Ah! you see what a bad fellow he was, and how richly he deserved all—all—through the long years. Every one was laughing—or he fancied so—at the other girl's trick, and saying that he had been jilted; and men were wanted for the Crimea, so he enlisted. He fought like a mad tiger, hoping that he would be killed; but he wasn't. He came back, and found himself rich. And now he was in his right mind again. He went down quickly to Ruth's home."

Once more a strange spasm passed over the old face. The long hand grasped the chair's oaken arm.

"He meant to beg her to forgive him. He meant to fall at her feet and tell her the whole truth. But she was gone."

"Clara said——" began Robin.

The old gentleman had not heard the interruption.

"Where she was gone, he followed. He resolved to wait, as she had waited. He hoped that a time would come when she would awake and be herself again, and that then—then—— He hoped it—at first he believed it. But no matter. He bought a house as near her as he could find one. He bought all he could buy of the land round it. He would suffer nothing, possible to avoid, between that house and—hers.—Thirty-five years! He waited thirty-five years."

The old gentleman rose suddenly. The faded paper fluttered to the ground.

"Ah! Look you here, my boy. I mustn't go without showing you this. It came to me three days ago from a lawyer's office. She had a fortune in her own right; and on her twenty-first birthday—some two years after she met the young tutor—she made her simple will, leaving him all. Here is her signature:

'Ruth Ennerdale.'

That is her hand. It has been accumulating. It comes to a great deal of money. You will hear more of it some day, my Little Lad. I have done with it what she would have desired."

He folded the paper, inclosing it in his silver-clasped pocket-book. Then he took his hat and went out.

Robin followed like a little dog, through the glass door, round the house, into the road. The sun was setting, as on that evening a week ago; its glow transfigured the hedges. After some time they passed into a peaceful lane; whence presently a gate opened upon quiet walks, green swards, and graves beguiled by flowers.

The old gentleman entered, Robin still following. They turned from the main path to a still spot overshadowed by a weeping ash. Here was one grave alone, newly made, covered with fresh and fragrant wreaths.

The old gentleman stood still, looking down upon it.

"Ruth!" he said suddenly. "Do you remember the story of Ruth, boy? . . . Ruth's words reversed; Ruth's words returned to her! Despitefully entreated, flung away, but now returned to her!"

He bared his white head, and repeated, still gazing upon the grave:

"Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and there will I be buried."

Then he was silent.

At length Robin pulled timidly at his coat.

"It's getting very late," said the child. "I think it's bedtime, I see two stars."

"Run home," said the old gentleman dreamily. "Your mother will miss you. Run home as fast as you can, my Little Lad."

Early next morning, when Robin went out of doors, he saw a small knot of people looking hither and thither, discoursing in anxious tones. A policeman, two or three women, and a majestic man-servant—whom Robin knew.

"What's the matter, Mr. Belton?" he inquired, stealing up in the rear.

"Here is the little gentleman I mentioned, policeman," said Belton. "I was just about to step across, young sir, to ask when you last saw my master."

"He's in the habit of staying up in the library, policeman, till very late these summer nights," said one of the women. "He bars the glass door himself. That's why we never found it out till Mr. Belton took his shaving-water."

"He went last night to the cemetery," said Robin. "I went too, and he sent me home."

"We'll try the cemetery next, then," said the policeman cheerfully.

The gates were not yet unlocked. The lodge-keeper apologized. He had overslept himself, and neglected his early round. He had seen no one.

But they went on, led by Robin, into the shadow of the weeping ash.

Stretched upon that newly-made grave—the wreaths which had covered it arranged, with soldierly precision, below—his arms clasped about its head, his face turned downward, as if to meet some other face, dearly loved, lay the Gentleman Opposite.

How soundly he was sleeping! thought Robin.

And in his sleep he smiled.

The blinds were all drawn down in the long low house. The *History of the 17th Lancers* would never be finished.

But over the way, in the cottage built out of spite, there was joy—all the sweeter for its surprise. It was like a fairy tale; she could hardly believe it, Mrs. Savile said. That the very day before the awful bill became due—the bill renewed again and again, but now inevitable—which would have plunged them into hopeless ruin, a lawyer should come and tell them that they were

poor no longer, but rich—not merely “well-off,” but rich—beyond their wildest desires!

The Gentleman Opposite, said the lawyer, had made them heirs to a fortune long ago bequeathed to him. His own property was entailed; but the present legacy—the original testatrix having died without kith or kin, and being formerly upon intimate terms with the Savile family—was, the lawyer opined, eminently suitable. He begged, in any necessary business arrangements, to offer his services.

The lawyer having bowed himself out, the curate-vicar ran swiftly up the narrow stairs, and found his wife, whom the strange voice had startled, trembling, and praying for courage to encounter new sorrows.

But her prayer became praise! Together they thanked God. The one shadow tempering their happiness was that—on this side the grave—they could not thank the Gentleman Opposite.

Robin's bereavement was greatly softened when he found that they were all going home in peace: all except Clara, who had promised to marry the milkman.

On the night before that happy journey, it seemed to the child that he stood once more in the old library, and near him stood a tall figure, which he knew and yet knew not. The face was young; the black eyes had never shone with such brilliance. They were looking toward the picture; and suddenly the smiling form therein moved and stepped forth to meet him, holding out her hands.

“Now at last you can tell me all,” she said. “Ah, it is over! We shall part no more.”

She pointed toward the garden. They went together through the glass door. A white bird flew before them; the flowering trees were in bloom; and there was music, as of voices in concert, far away.

And still the white bird flew on; and the two figures, clasped together, followed. The garden was lengthening and widening; the white bird's wings were touched with a golden glow.

“Is this Heaven?” said Robin.

He had spoken aloud in his sleep. Therewith he awoke.

It was morning. The sun was already high, and the sky beyond his window was blue.

And across the passage he heard his mother's voice—still weak, but with life renewed—singing, from gladness of heart, as a child sings, the Morning Hymn.

OUT OF A PIONEER'S TRUNK*

BY BRET HARTE



It was a slightly cynical, but fairly good-humored crowd that had gathered before a warehouse on Long Wharf in San Francisco, one afternoon in the summer of '51. Although the occasion was an auction, the bidders' chances more than usually hazardous, and the season and locality famous for reckless speculation, there was scarcely any excitement among the bystanders, and a lazy, half-humorous curiosity seemed to have taken the place of any zeal for gain.

It was an auction of unclaimed trunks and boxes—the personal luggage of early emigrants—which had been left on storage in hulk or warehouse at San Francisco, while the owner was seeking his fortune in the mines. The difficulty and expense of transport, often obliging the gold-seeker to make part of his journey on foot, restricted him to the smallest *impedimenta*, and that of a kind not often found in the luggage of ordinary civilization. As a consequence, during the emigration of '49, he was apt on landing to avail himself of the invitation usually displayed on some of the doors of the rude hostleries on the shore: "Rest for the Weary and Storage for Trunks." In a majority of cases he never returned to claim his stored property. Enforced absence, protracted equally by good or evil fortune, accumulated the high storage charges until they usually far exceeded the actual value of the goods; sickness, further emigration, or death also reduced the number of possible claimants, and that more wonderful human frailty—absolute forgetfulness of deposited possessions—combined together to leave the bulk of the property in the custodian's hands. Under an understood agreement they were always sold at public auction after a given time. Although the contents of some of the trunks

* A selection from "The Strand."

were exposed, it was found more in keeping with the public sentiment to sell the trunks *unlocked* and *unopened*. The element of curiosity was kept up from time to time by the incautious disclosures of the lucky or unlucky purchaser, and general bidding thus encouraged—except when the speculator, with the true gambling instinct, gave no indication in his face of what was drawn in this lottery. Generally, however, some suggestion on the exterior of the trunk, a label or initials; some conjectural knowledge of its former owner, or the idea that he might be secretly present in the hope of getting his property back for less than the accumulated dues, kept up the bidding and interest.

A modest-looking, well-worn portmanteau had been just put up at a small, opening bid, when Harry Flint joined the crowd. The young man had arrived a week before at San Francisco friendless and penniless, and had been forced to part with his own effects to procure necessary food and lodging while looking for an employment. In the irony of fate that morning the proprietors of a dry-goods store, struck with his good looks and manners, had offered him a situation, if he could make himself more presentable to their fair clients. Harry Flint was gazing half abstractedly, half hopelessly, at the portmanteau without noticing the auctioneer's persuasive challenge. In his abstraction he was not aware that the auctioneer's assistant was also looking at him curiously, and that possibly his dejected and half-clad appearance had excited the attention of one of the cynical bystanders, who was exchanging a few words with the assistant. He was, however, recalled to himself a moment later when the portmanteau was knocked down at fifteen dollars, and considerably startled when the assistant placed it at his feet with a grim smile. "That's your property, Fowler, and I reckon you look as if you wanted it back bad."

"But—there's some mistake," stammered Flint. "I didn't bid."

"No, but Tom Flynn did for you. You see, I spotted you from the first, and told Flynn I reckoned you were one of those chaps who came back from the mines dead broke. And he up and bought your things for you—like a square man. That's Flynn's style, if he is a gambler."

"But," persisted Flint, "this never was my property. My name isn't Fowler, and I never left anything here."

The assistant looked at him with a grim, half-credulous, half-scornful smile. "Have it your own way," he said, "but I

oughter tell ye, old man, that I'm the warehouse clerk, and I remember *you*. I'm here for that purpose. But as that thar valise is bought and paid for by somebody else and given to you, it's nothing more to me. Take or leave it."

The ridiculousness of quarreling over the mere form of his good fortune here struck Flint, and, as his abrupt benefactor had as abruptly disappeared, he hurried off with his prize. Reaching his cheap lodging-house, he examined its contents. As he had surmised, it contained a full suit of clothing of the better sort, and suitable to his urban needs. There were a few articles of jewelry, which he put religiously aside. There were some letters, which seemed to be of a purely business character. There were a few daguerreotypes of pretty faces, one of which was singularly fascinating to him. But there was another, of a young man, which startled him with its marvelous resemblance *to himself*! In a flash of intelligence he understood it all now. It was the likeness of the former owner of the trunk, for whom the assistant had actually mistaken him! He glanced hurriedly at the envelopes of the letters. They were addressed to Shelby Fowler, the name by which the assistant had just called him. The mystery was plain now. And for the present he could fairly accept his good luck, and trust to later fortune to justify himself.

Transformed in his new garb, he left his lodgings to present himself once more to his possible employer. His way led past one of the large gambling saloons. It was yet too early to find the dry-goods trader disengaged; perhaps the consciousness of more decent, civilized garb emboldened him to mingle more freely with strangers, and he entered the saloon. He was scarcely abreast of one of the faro tables when a man suddenly leaped up with an oath and discharged a revolver full in his face. The shot missed. Before his unknown assailant could fire again the astonished Flint had closed upon him, and instinctively clutched the weapon. A brief but violent struggle ensued. Flint felt his strength failing him, when suddenly a look of astonishment came into the furious eyes of his adversary, and the man's grasp mechanically relaxed. The half-freed pistol, thrown upwards by this movement, was accidentally discharged point blank into his temples, and he fell dead. No one in the crowd had stirred or interfered.

"You've done for French Pete this time, Mr. Fowler," said a voice at his elbow. He turned gaspingly, and recognized his strange benefactor, Flynn. "I call you all to witness, gentlemen,"

continued the gambler, turning dictatorially to the crowd, "that this man was *first* attacked and was *unarmed*." He lifted Flint's limp and empty hands and then pointed to the dead man, who was still grasping the weapon. "Come!" He caught the half-paralyzed arm of Flint and dragged him into the street.

"But," stammered the horrified Flint, as he was borne along, "what does it all mean? What made that man attack me?"

"I reckon it was a case of shooting on sight, Mr. Fowler; but he missed it by not waiting to see if you were armed. It wasn't the square thing, and you're all right with the crowd now, whatever he might have had agin you."

"But," protested the unhappy Flint, "I never laid eyes on the man before, and my name isn't Fowler."

Flynn halted, and dragged him in a doorway. "Who the devil are you?" he asked roughly.

Briefly, passionately, almost hysterically, Flint told him his scant story. An odd expression came over the gambler's face.

"Look here," he said abruptly, "I have passed my word to the crowd yonder that you are a dead-broke miner called Fowler. I allowed that you might have had some row with that Sydney duck, Australian Pete, in the mines. That satisfied them. If I go back now, and say it's a lie, that your name ain't Fowler, and you never knew who Pete was, they'll jest pass you over to the police to deal with you, and wash their hands of it altogether. You may prove to the police who you are, and how that d—— clerk mistook you, but it will give you trouble. And who is there here who knows who you really are?"

"No one," said Flint, with sudden hopelessness.

"And you say you are an orphan, and ain't got any relations livin' that you're beholden to?"

"No one."

"Then, take my advice, and *be* Fowler, and stick to it! Be Fowler until Fowler turns up and thanks you for it, for you've saved Fowler's life, as Pete would never have funk'd and lost his grit over Fowler as he did with you; and you've a right to his name."

He stopped, and the same odd, superstitious look came into his dark eyes.

"Don't you see what all that means? Well, I'll tell you. You're in the biggest streak of luck a man ever had. You've got the cards in your own hands! They spell 'Fowler'! Play Fowler first, last, and all the time. Good-night, and good luck, *Mr. Fowler*."

The next morning's journal contained an account of the justifiable killing of the notorious desperado and ex-convict, Australian Pete, by a courageous young miner by the name of Fowler. "An act of firmness and daring," said *The Pioneer*, "which will go far to counteract the terrorism produced by those lawless ruffians."

In his new suit of clothes, and with this paper in his hand, Flint sought the dry-goods proprietor—the latter was satisfied and convinced. That morning Harry Flint began his career as salesman and as "Shelby Fowler."

From that day Shelby Fowler's career was one of uninterrupted prosperity. Within the year he became a partner. The same miraculous fortune followed other ventures later. He was mill owner, mine owner, bank director—a millionaire! He was popular, the reputation of his brief achievement over the desperado kept him secure from the attack of envy and rivalry. He never was confronted by the real Fowler. There was no danger of exposure by others—the one custodian of his secret, Tom Flynn, died in Nevada the year following. He had quite forgotten his youthful past, and even the more recent lucky portmanteau; remembered nothing, perhaps, but the pretty face of the daguerreotype that had fascinated him. There seemed to be no reason why he should not live and die as Shelby Fowler.

His business a year later took him to Europe. He was entering a train at one of the great railway stations of London, when the porter, who had just deposited his portmanteau in a compartment, reappeared at the window, followed by a young lady in mourning.

"Beg pardon, sir, but I handed you the wrong portmanteau. That belongs to this young lady. This is yours."

Flint glanced at the portmanteau on the seat before him. It certainly was not his, although it bore the initials "S. F." He was mechanically handing it back to the porter, when his eyes fell on the young lady's face. For an instant he stood petrified. It was the face of the daguerreotype. "I beg pardon," he stammered, "but are these your initials?" She hesitated, perhaps it was the abruptness of the question, but he saw she looked confused.

"No. A friend's."

She disappeared into another carriage, but from that moment Harry Flint knew that he had no other aim in life but to follow

this clue and the beautiful girl who had dropped it. He bribed the guard at the next station, and discovered that she was going to York. On their arrival, he was ready on the platform to respectfully assist her. A few words disclosed the fact that she was a fellow-countrywoman, although residing in England, and at present on her way to join some friends at Harrogate. Her name was West. At the mention of his, he again fancied she looked disturbed.

They met again and again; the informality of his introduction was overlooked by her friends, as his assumed name was already respectably and responsibly known beyond California. He thought no more of his future. He was in love. He even dared to think it might be returned; but he felt he had no right to seek that knowledge until he had told her his real name and how he came to assume another's. He did so alone—scarcely a month after their first meeting. To his alarm, she burst into a flood of tears, and showed an agitation that seemed far beyond any apparent cause. When she had partly recovered, she said, in a low, frightened voice:

"You are bearing *my brother's* name. But it was a name that the unhappy boy had so shamefully disgraced in Australia that he abandoned it, and, as he lay upon his death-bed, the last act of his wasted life was to write an imploring letter begging me to change mine too. For the infamous companion of his crime, who had first tempted, then betrayed him, had possession of all his papers and letters, many of them from *me*, and was threatening to bring them to our Virginia home and expose him to our neighbors. Maddened by desperation, the miserable boy twice attempted the life of the scoundrel, and might have added that blood-guiltiness to his other sins, had he lived. I *did* change my name to my mother's maiden one, left the country, and have lived here to escape the revelations of that desperado, should he fulfill his threat."

In a flash of recollection Flint remembered the startled look that had come into his assailant's eye after they had clinched. It was the same man who had too late realized that his antagonist was not Fowler. "Thank God! you are forever safe from any exposure from that man," he said, gravely, "and the name of Fowler has never been known in San Francisco save in all respect and honor. It is for you to take back—fearlessly and alone!"

She did—but not alone, for she shared it with her husband.



BY BLANCHE LINDSAY.

“AND so, you see, the poor little thing is coming to a kind of haven.”

“Yes?”

“It isn’t everybody who would dream of coming in that spirit.”

“Oh no!”

“And so one ought to be grateful to her. It shows a sort of—well, a sort of affectionate confidence—gratitude almost.”

“As to future favors?”

“Nonsense, Lawrence! For my part, I like warm-hearted people, especially girls. I get to forgive them all their sins.”

“Really!”

“You needn’t push up your eyebrows like that, Lawrence.”

“Did I?”

“Yes, you did. Just as if you could never believe in anybody or anything.”

“Oh, as to that——”

“Well, as to that?”

“You want me to believe too much surely, Charlotte. It is difficult to believe that the verb to jilt is conjugated by ladies of angelic disposition only, and that the jilter, not the jilted, is to be admired—even pitied.”

“Poor little Rose!”

“Poor big Charles!”

“Nonsense, Lawrence. You really are too provoking.”

“Well, then, I retract. Charles is to be envied.”

“Envied!”

“Yes. Fancy if, after marriage——”

* A selection from “The Pall Mall Magazine.”

"Nonsense!"

"——if, after marriage, the lady had grown terribly bored!"

"Lawrence!"

"Well?"

"I want you to be kind to her."

"Oh, certainly! She doesn't like fishing, I presume? I am not speaking metaphorically."

"I don't imagine her an angler."

"That's good. I can keep out of her way, then—couldn't do a kinder turn to any girl."

"Lawrence!"

"Mayn't I go now?"

"She will be here by lunch-time."

"Ah! I'm off at twelve-thirty. I'll get the cook to make me some sandwiches."

Mr. Lawrence Wentworth thereupon, nodding affectionately at his sister, left the room, and betook himself to the contemplation of the various fishing-rods and other piscatorial tackle which decorated his own private apartment—a small, plainly furnished room, termed the study. It was thus denominated from politeness, perhaps also in jest—certainly never in serious earnest, for Mr. Wentworth, the squire, owner of a lovely riverside realm of goodly breadth and length, was no bookworm, and would certainly have thought it sad waste of valuable time to sit and read or write at home when he could spend balmy silent hours standing above the green flags and yellow iris, dreaming of leviathan-like trout, or, if the worst days came to the worst, pulling his cap well over his brows, and trudging across country in pelting rain, to examine the state of the crops and get a good appetite for dinner.

What is one man's meat is another man's poison, and, as Lawrence Wentworth never argued nor wasted words, it was left to the listener's imagination to decide whether books and the painful acquirement of knowledge, or idle indoor life merely, represented any noxious drug in the squire's opinion.

The house itself was altogether under the charge of his widowed sister, Mrs. Marshall—a ruler of conscientious though benevolent sway. It was she who that very morning had received a letter from a young friend, which young friend, acting foolishly (as some people thought), had but lately broken off an advantageous marriage engagement, suddenly, unreasonably, and inexplicably. It was she, Mrs. Marshall, who now stood

in the bedroom prepared for this expected culprit, placing neat little bunches of flowers in old-fashioned glasses intended for such decoration upon the said culprit's dressing-table.

Kind Mrs. Marshall, as she patted the pansies and rosebuds deftly into place, shook her head somewhat anxiously, and communed with herself.

"I dare say he's half sorry already!" she murmured. "Lawrence is never quite so harsh as he intends to be! Of course she was wrong, poor dear, and Charles Davenport would have been an excellent match; but it was sweet of her to want to come here to be taken care of."

Mrs. Marshall, as she breathed out her kindly words to the flowers, may be described as a fine, well-made woman entering on middle age, and not unlike her brother the squire in face or figure. Both, though past their first youth, were still ruddy of face and smooth of skin; both owned fair hair and blue eyes. In the brother's case the hair was cropped exceedingly short, and the eyes were serious, even dreamy; whilst the sister's eyes were often lighted by a merry twinkle, and her long hair—the envy of many a younger woman—was neatly braided at the back of her head. Both could boast fairly regular features, and especially the beauty of a well-shaped mouth, opened only for dire necessity in the case of Mr. Wentworth, whose face was clean-shaven, and as smooth almost as his sister's.

In the meantime that gentleman had by no means repented his harsh judgment of Rose Berners. Far from it. He was humming softly to himself, singling out the most tempting of flies from his collection, meditating on that gem of flies the live May-fly, which, during the present month, should be at its best and friendliest; and the slight discontent which ruffled his brow was altogether owing to the fact that he must put off for two more hours the pleasure of starting on an expedition, just because he was obliged to see his agent and indite a couple of business letters before post-time.

Hard indeed was Mr. Wentworth's heart—the nether mill-stone being a soft cushion in comparison. He never even remembered the existence of Miss Berners during the whole of that delightful, hot and solitary day; and when, a little before dinner-time, he returned home through fields yellow with buttercups or sprinkled white with daisies, the soft air playing about his temples, he took off his cap and gazed up into the peaceful sky, and everything seemed to him delightful and cheering. (It

is, perhaps, superfluous to add that his afternoon's sport had been extremely successful.)

Such peace and happiness were not destined to last. On entering the house, by the back door as usual, Mr. Wentworth nearly broke his shins over a box which was, in truth, almost as wide as the badly-lit passage itself; furthermore, when half the household came running out from different portions of the basement, in answer to his sturdy, if laconic, adjurations to the box, it was small comfort to learn that this was one of Miss Berners' trunks, left behind at the station, and fetched only just now by Thomas in the pony-cart.

Mr. Wentworth mounted the back stairs silently and also cautiously. It is always well to put off an evil moment; there was no need to meet this new-comer till dinner should be actually announced—on the table, in fact. Then, of course, evil fate, and the senseless customs of society, would decree that two congenial people and one uncongenial person must feed together. After all, what are meals? First, we cannot ignore the physical duty of filling—stoking, so to speak—the human stomach. Secondly, comes the moral duty of hospitality. Or that stands first, perhaps; who knows?

Mr. Wentworth presented an admirable appearance when he finally entered the drawing-room; his tailor would have wept tears of joy to see how greatly the beauty of sartorial handiwork became, and possibly improved, the manly form and grace of the silent squire.

"But, my dear Lawrence," said Mrs. Marshall, "the soup must be quite tepid."

She cast a look of reproach at her brother. She rose hastily, in her rustling black silk, from the sofa. Surely it was uncivil of him to be so late, she thought.

A tall, slight figure beside her rose also. Here were none of the smart clothes which Mr. Wentworth had crossly expected to see. Only a plain, high, dark costume—gingham, or some such stuff.

"My box was left behind—it was our fault—my maid's and mine," said a musical voice, somewhat spasmodically, "and so I thought I'd better not dress. I was afraid of keeping Mrs. Marshall."

The "only man" bowed silently and offered his arm. Rose placed a hand within that arm, and was led to the dining-room. "I did not like at once to object to being treated like a visitor," she afterwards explained to her hostess.

Her host had honored her with one quick glance. "Pretty?" he asked himself. "Yes, of course; all jilts are pretty; otherwise they wouldn't have the chance."

Mr. Wentworth considered himself, above all things, a gentleman; consequently the evening passed with such amiable decorum of speech and manner as fluctuates betwixt politeness and boredom. He spoke just enough during dinner to offer the chief delicacies to his guest; he made two remarks concerning the weather, another with regard to the slowness of country trains, cross-lines especially. He listened with apparent deference and a shade—a gentle shade—of interest to the spasmodic conversation which passed between the ladies. After dinner he, with indolent graciousness, exhibited a number of photographs; some were family portraits—yellow likenesses of persons in old-fashioned costumes; some were Alpine views. (The former made the guest laugh; the latter forced from her more than one stifled yawn.) Finally, the master of the house lit the young lady's bedroom candle with precisely that amount of alacrity which evinces chivalrous attentiveness but not unseemly joy. Then, when the girl had walked away and was well out of view, he turned with a sigh to his sister, and muttered:

"Does she mean to stay long?"

"My dear Lawrence! Why, nothing is settled, of course. The poor dear must recover her spirits. I thought you seemed to get on beautifully with her."

"Oh, did you?"

"And she is wretched at home because of that step-mother."

"Oh, is she?"

"Why, I told you about it before. Really, Lawrence!"

"Always the fault of the young people in those cases," growled the squire, lighting his own candle.

Meanwhile Miss Berners was combing out her locks upstairs.

To her went kind Mrs. Marshall.

"I do hope you are not too tired, darling."

"Oh no! How good you are to me! And isn't it funny I should know you so well and never have seen your brother?"

"Not so very odd, dear. You see, Lawrence scarcely ever moves from here, and you have never been to this place. But now you have come."

"Like Mahomet and the mountain," murmured Miss Rose.

"And he's so unlike you, *isn't* he?"

"Who, dear—who?"

"Why, your brother. You look a century younger, to begin with, and then—then—I hope I haven't disturbed him—do you think?"

"No," answered Mrs. Marshall shortly. It was she who seemed disturbed.

"Ah, well, he won't disturb me," said the young lady with equanimity. "And you and I can have nice long days together, can't we, Mrs. Marshall?"

"Ye-es," said Mrs. Marshall dubiously. "Is it really all off with poor Charles, Rosie?"

"Why, yes, of course. He'll find out his luck some day, won't he? Good-night, you dear."

And the two ladies kissed.

The next morning Miss Berners was what the squire called "all over the place." He congratulated himself on having an excellent lock to his study door, and he turned the key with some unusual fierceness in his mild eyes. He need not have troubled himself. Miss Berners, having once ascertained the whereabouts of the squire's special domain, gave it thenceforth a wide berth.

It was a strange thing that, some three or four days later, he should of his own free will invite her to accompany him to the river-side.

"The water-lilies are so fine," he asserted. "All ladies like water-lilies, don't they?"

"Yes," answered his guest, with complete gravity—"all ladies."

So the ill-matched couple went, and Mrs. Marshall stood in the porch, gazing after them in amaze. Only that very morning had Miss Rosie explained to the long-suffering Mrs. Marshall that her brother was what common parlance denominates—a savage!

"My French governess used to call people so," said the girl, undeterred. "*Un sauvage, un vrai sauvage*—a savage. And do you know" (and here her dimpled face and merry eyes lighted up), "there was an inn not far from where we lived in the country—and the sign was the sign of the salvage man—with a painting of a kind of Jack-in-the-green—a gentleman dressed in a complete costume of oak boughs—an absolute Jack-in-the-green!"

"Nonsense!" Mrs. Marshall had said.

But now here was her visitor walking demurely down to the river by the side of the said Jack (who was not clad in green boughs by any means, but in orthodox country costume of light

tweed, with a gray, soft felt hat slouched over his brows). And the salvage man, as he strolled on with his hands in his pockets, was listening—whether contentedly or discontentedly it was impossible to tell—to the ceaseless chatter of his companion.

It would not do to bore him with overmuch of such girlish chatter.

Mrs. Marshall arranged a volume or two of Macaulay and also some of her favorite poets on a handy drawing-room table, ready for evening use. Lawrence, though a poor conversationalist, was by no means a bad reader. There is nothing like reading aloud to promote sociability amongst three people; the "*tiers incommodé*," whoever he may be, is supplemented, so to speak, by the volume itself. The author, whether poet, historian or novelist, has somehow come to the rescue; four people, not three any longer, are gathered round the table, with one common interest to bind them.

Admirable reflections! Mrs. Marshall was positively staggered to find that she had reckoned without her two companions.

"Do you mind looking into my den for an hour?" asked the squire blandly. "I am going to teach Miss Berners to make flies."

"Going to teach?"

And so he was, in truth! Feathers, silks, cobbler's wax, etc., already strewed the table. Rosie's long sleeves had to be rolled up to the elbow, and she found it necessary to don a tiny white muslin apron which was apparently amongst her traveling accoutrements. So much preparation was scarcely needed, thought Mrs. Marshall; but her brother evidently held a different opinion, for he littered the floor with books and papers in order to clear other tables, and walked unceasingly backwards and forwards between Miss Berners and the window, asking anxiously, though laconically, if she were "getting on all right?"

Then Mrs. Marshall remembered how the girl had spoken slightly of the salvage man, and she grew irate in her heart. He was too good for *her*, any way; wretched little flirt! Jilt, that was the word! Mrs. Marshall wondered if Lawrence thought much of poor Charles and his wrongs, now.

But she spoke not at all on the subject. She knew how to be as taciturn as her brother, if need be.

Thus it was that, on the following morning, when the squire casually mentioned at breakfast that he intended sculling Miss Berners down-stream a couple of hundred yards or so, Mrs. Marshall put on a sphinx-like expression and replied:

"Yes?"

They were a goodly pair, she thought presently, as she watched them striking across the golden meadows, away towards the peaceful belt of trees, betwixt whose slim trunks glittered the sheen of the water.

This was what happened.

"Can you steer?" asked Mr. Wentworth.

"A little; don't expect too much from me."

Lawrence merely nodded reply.

The girl, seated in the boat, somewhat nervously took hold of the cords.

"Wait a bit," said Lawrence. "Now, right—off shore—too much, too much; no, left."

The boat performed the most extraordinary gyrations.

"Perhaps," said the salvage man, trying to be civil, "perhaps, if you leave off steering, we might get along."

Rose dropped the strings as though they had been red-hot, whereupon the aggravating boat righted itself with strange rapidity.

They were floating down-stream now, drifting deliciously. From the green woods came the song of birds; some lazy cows stared across a field full of buttercups; at the water's edge yellow iris rose like golden stars amongst the green flags.

Rosie made a dash at some water-lilies.

"Don't!" said her companion. "They've got nasty tough roots." But, seeing her disappointment, he added, "You can have lots by and by."

So they came within sight of a great tract peopled with reeds—tall reeds, like a water-forest.

"I'll tell you what," said Lawrence, "we'll rush the boat. Sit tight."

Miss Berners sat tight. She understood that much, if nothing else. But how beautiful it was to feel the increased speed growing rapidly to excessive swiftness, whilst the rush of water swirled around, and parting, bending reeds crushed under the keel, making a pathway through their very thickest companies, to rise up at once again like a mysterious, sheltering wall!

Suddenly the boat came to a standstill, only rocking gently on its green osier bed. This was a hiding-place, indeed—a complete haven, unseen, unguessed of, save by the swallows overhead, or the water-fairies below.

Lawrence stretched himself at full length, his hands clasped

over his head. He did not look amiss in his suit of white flannels, thought Miss Rosie. But for a gray lock here and there in his short hair, Time had dealt gently with him—he was surely considerably younger than Mrs. Marshall !

Needless to say, he was silent. He did not even glance at his companion, nor did he meditate upon her appearance; truth to tell, he was wondering whether that hawk which Jenks the keeper had told him of had been seen again, and whether it were likely to disturb the young pheasants.

"Mr. Wentworth, I want to ask you something," said Rosie's clear voice.

He roused himself and stared at her. She was certainly eager—anxious-looking almost. She leaned forward, her elbows on her knees, her fingers restlessly clasped and unclasped; a bright scarlet spot burned on both her cheeks.

Lawrence nodded.

"I want—I want to ask you—do you know Mr. Charles Davenport well?"

"Pretty well," answered Lawrence.

"Then I suppose you have heard—you are quite aware——"

Lawrence nodded again.

"I mean," continued Miss Berners, flushing still more, "you have heard the whole story?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps from him?"

"No."

"Well," continued the girl, somewhat abashed, "I—I—I should like to ask you what you think."

"Oh, don't!"

"I suppose you can't understand throwing anybody over?"

"Oh, yes."

"You can?"

"Under some circumstances. But——"

"Pray go on. I think it would be right up to the last moment."

"In some cases."

"In this one," continued Miss Berners, with heat.

"Need we?"

"Yes, certainly; I wish it. Tell me, Mr. Wentworth, that you understand."

"Truly."

"And you think?"

"What does it matter what I think! You insist? Well, then,

it did seem sort of sneaky—just a little bit, you know, only a very little bit.”

There was a pause; an awful pause.

At last came the words, clear as bells: “Will you please row me home, Mr. Wentworth?”

It did not signify to Lawrence now whether hawks, swans or humming-birds were circling overhead. He bestirred himself in silence.

The boat rocked, slithering like an aquatic Juggernaut upon the bending, crushing reeds.

It takes more out of a man to scull up-stream than to float down-stream, but no undue exertion was evident on the part of the squire, though the boat shot quickly back to its mooring-place beside his own golden fields.

Rosie vouchsafed never a word. She jumped from the boat almost before such a feat was safe, disdaining the salvage man's proffered arm, and nearly pitching him, herself and the boat into the deep waters.

It was not long before Miss Berners stood in the presence of Mrs. Marshall.

“I have come,” she began spasmodically—she had been running and was out of breath—“I have come to say that I must go this afternoon—this very day. He has insulted me; he said—said—said—it was sneaky; and—and—and—I can't bear it!”

“My dear!” expostulated Mrs. Marshall. And the thought crossed her mind, “Has the poor child gone mad?”

No, the child was not mad; she was only sobbing and clasp-
ing Mrs. Marshall's knees.

“What—what—what,” she sobbed,—“what is the use of caring about him?”

What, indeed? Here was a new light—one which nearly caused Mrs. Marshall's well-regulated hair to stand on end.

“Care for whom?” she murmured, trying to gain time.

“I felt quite sure, especially when we made flies,” sobbed the girl. “And now he has insulted me!”

Presently, strange as it may seem, Mrs. Marshall wended her way to her brother's study, to ask his intentions concerning their young visitor. Nothing but the promise of this had pacified Miss Berners.

Mrs. Marshall shook her head as she walked slowly down-stairs. *She* knew well enough that a man does not call a girl “sneaky” and wish to marry her, in one and the same breath. However,

her own course was clear. It was certainly best that Lawrence and Miss Berners should not meet again. Cold words, and colder looks, might thus be avoided. Once in possession of a terse sentence from Lawrence, disclaiming all desire for wifely affection, Mrs. Marshall could return to the drawing-room with a clear conscience if not a light heart.

"Lawrence," she murmured insinuatingly, opening the study door an inch or two.

"What's up?" came the discouraging answer.

Mrs. Marshall entered bravely.

"Miss Berners is going away," she began, "and—and——"

The kind-hearted woman gathered courage as she went on.

"Poor little soul!" she said. "You have managed to hurt her feelings. You called her some dreadful name; a sneak, wasn't it?"

"No, no."

"Something bad, Lawrence."

"I said what she did was sneaky, rather. And so it was."

"Oh, Lawrence, you shouldn't have judged."

"Why did she ask me, then?"

"Poor dear! She has a great need of affection. So great that she often mistakes—I mean, she might mistake—that is, she might suppose——"

The squire knitted his brows.

"I don't follow you," he said.

"Well, there are only two ways," continued his sister, still enigmatically. "Of course you didn't want to insult her."

"Oh no."

"And equally, of course, you didn't want to make up to her."

"Well?"

"I mean you were not thinking. Dear Lawrence, you know so little about women! When you took her out, when you taught her to make flies——"

"Yes?"

"You didn't want her to learn to care for you?"

Then a very odd thing happened. The squire rose from his chair and went up to his sister, laid his hand lightly on her arm, and looked straight into her eyes. Was she dreaming, or were there really shining tears standing in *his* eyes?

"You couldn't—you can't——" she stammered. "Why, you have seen nothing of the girl!"

"A fortnight," said the squire, in a strange, strained voice.

"And Charles Davenport! Oh, Lawrence!"

But Mr. Wentworth took out a letter from the breast-pocket of his coat and handed it to his sister.

"Dear Lawrence," thus ran the words, "you will have heard of my disappointment. It is six weeks old now—that disappointment, as people still choose to call it—but I am getting reconciled. I won't say yet who is staying down here, and who helps me to become reconciled, but——"

Mrs. Marshall placed the letter softly on the table. The signature was in full view: "Charles Davenport." Reconciled, was he—reconciled? The signed name blazed up into her face and burned her sight.

"Lawrence," Mrs. Marshall said gently, turning to her brother.

But she could not see him. A vision of their past quiet life, a vision of the new life dawning for him, whilst her own path must lie elsewhere—in solitude for certain, in sorrow perhaps: these visions rose up between her and the pale, gentle face of Lawrence Wentworth.

Yet he was gazing tenderly at her all the time. And meanwhile, here was the new life knocking at the door, opening the door softly, coming in on tiptoe, half shyly, half boldly—a new life, with sweet eyes drowned in tears, an untidy head of hair, and parted red lips which murmured:

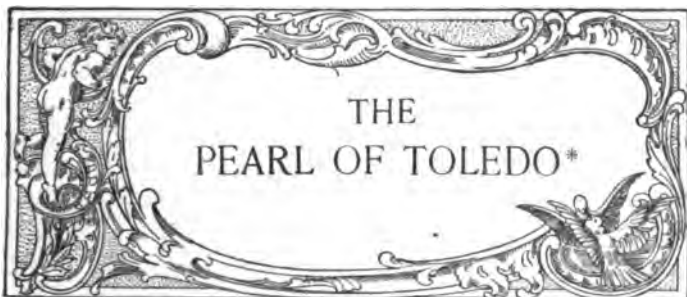
"Please tell me what time is my train. When must I be ready to go?"

But she did not go, that slender new life in her white draperies. She came forward instead, and walked straight into the squire's outstretched arms, and nestled herself instantly within his heart of hearts.

It was Mrs. Marshall who went away and left them together—those unexpected lovers.

Whether Miss Berners found her salvage man too silent or too explicit, either then or thereafter, this chronicler cannot tell. Suffice it to say that the two were married after an engagement as brief as had been their courtship.

There were people who insinuated that the squire was afraid of being jilted. But the bare truth remains: he was not afraid at all.



BY PROSPER MERRIMÉE

WHO will say when the sun is more beautiful, at its rising or at its setting? Who will say which is the more beautiful tree, the olive or the almond? Who will tell me who is the braver, the Valencian or the Andalusian? Who can name me the fairest of women? "I'll name you the fairest of women: Aurora of Vargas, the Pearl of Toledo."

Tuzani, the Moor, has demanded his lance, his buckler also demanded; his lance he holds in his strong right hand, his buckler he hangs o'er his shoulders. He descends to his stables, and one by one examines his forty chargers. Then says: "The strongest is Berja; on her well-rounded crupper I'll carry away the Pearl of Toledo; if not, by Allah! never will I again be seen in Cordova."

He departs on his steed, he arrives at Toledo, and there near the Zacatin meets with an old man. "Pray carry this letter, my graybeard, to Don Guttiere, to Don Guttiere of Saldana. If he be a man, he will come and fight with me close by the fount of Almami. To but one of us two can belong the Pearl of Toledo."

And the old one took up the letter and carried it straight to the Count of Saldana, as this one was playing at chess with the Pearl of Toledo. The Count has read the letter of challenge, and has given the table a blow with his fist that scatters its contents over the floor. And he rises and asks for his lance and his good old charger; the Pearl has likewise arisen, trembling with fear, for she is aware that her lord is preparing to go to a duel.

* Translated from the French, for Short Stories, by Frederick J. Tausig.—Copyrighted.

"My lord Guttiere, Don Guttiere of Saldana, remain, I beg of you; play once more with me."

"No longer will I play at chess; I wish to play at a game of lances close by the fount of Almami."

There by the fountain the turf has been reddened. Red also the fountain's water; but it is not the blood of a Christian knight that reddens the turf and the fountain. Tuzani the Moor lies stretched on his back; the lance of Don Guttiere has snapped in his breast; his blood is leaving him little by little. Berja, his steed, looks at him tearfully; she is unable to cure her poor master.

The Pearl alights from her mule: "Sir Knight, have courage; you will still live to marry a beautiful Moorish maid; my hand can cure the wounds that are made by my master."

"O pearl so white! O pearl so fair! take from my heart this splinter of lance that is rending it; the cold of the steel freezes and chills me."

Little suspecting, she has approached; but he with an effort recovers his strength, and with a slash of his sword disfigures those beautiful features.



THE BOTKINE BATH *

BY ADELINE STEARNS WING



ON the morning of a sultry July day, Professor Botkine, of the University of California, was sitting on his front steps at Berkeley. He was delightedly watching the efforts of his pet toad to capture a very large angle-worm, and his enjoyment was enhanced by the fact that his beautiful German wife, who usually declined to interest herself in anything which she even suspected of a connection with science, was seated beside him, giving eager little pressures to his hand and uttering a pleased exclamation, in her pretty foreign accent, whenever the toad made an extra effort.

The fact was that she, while cutting roses, had been the one to see the beginning of the contest, and felt the proper pride of a discoverer. The toad had been sitting still, looking as if carved by a Japanese artist, and giving no sign that it saw anything. The worm gave a little wriggle as it began to come out of the ground, when, quick as a flash, the toad made a leap and seized the end of the worm in its mouth.

Then began a tug-of-war. Every time that the toad gave a pull, the worm drew back. But the toad was not to be discouraged. It jerked and jerked until it fairly stood on its hind legs. Still, it could not dislodge the worm.

At this interesting point a train whistled.

"Why, Selma!" said the professor, "there is the train already. I had quite forgotten that I must go to the city to-day. Where is my hat?"

"Do wait an instant, dear; just see what the toad is doing," she answered, holding him back.

He glanced down and saw the toad twisting its leg about until the worm was wrapped twice around it, then the toad gave a hop, and out came the worm.

* A selection from "The Argonaut."

This had been too fascinating a spectacle to the unwary professor. He dashed into the house and back again, kissed his wife, and, with a grateful glance at her rippling hair and soft blue eyes, started off.

Suddenly he rushed back.

"Why, dear," he cried, "I forgot to tell you that that Mr. Smith, the Canadian who wrote the paper on bacteria, will be here this afternoon to stay a day or two. He may come before I am back."

She clasped her hands in mock despair. "But what shall I do with him?" she wailed; "you know I cannot talk science and pollywogs!"

"Oh, don't be alarmed. He isn't so very dried up. Just let him have a good soaking in a bath-tub. Then he will come out perfectly human and happy. He's an Englishman, you know," and the professor, with a laughing glance at his little wife's rueful expression, threw dignity and his coat-tails to the winds as he madly ran down the street, "looking like a great black bird of prey," as Mrs. Botkine laughingly remarked to herself.

But she grew sober as she thought how ruthlessly science and scientists seemed to dog her unwilling footsteps. Her husband certainly loved her, but he had a way of becoming utterly absorbed in his studies, and then bursting into her reflections with remarks which sounded positively ghoulish. He had appeared only yesterday in her own private sanctum carrying a "horrid snake" by the tail, and although he had not yet reached the pitch of Professor Agassiz—who was said to have consigned infant serpents, for safe-keeping over night, to his wife's boots—she did not know where his enthusiasm might lead.

"I'm half afraid to go to sleep," she had roguishly said to him one night. "I'm afraid that your deepest interest even in me is only scientific, and I believe you are capable of cutting me open to see what queer thing there is in my heart that I love such a bookish old bear with."

"Now here was this Canadian coming! And how was she to be properly interested in his old bacteria and not disgrace her husband by betraying her ignorance on the subject?" she asked herself.

Manifestly, he must take a bath, and everything possible must be done to make that bath-room attractive, so that he should stay there as long as possible. She went upstairs, and with her own dimpled hands got down a new cake of perfumed soap. She

eyed it critically. Perhaps his severe scientific mind would be disgusted with such effeminate luxury. Perhaps—who knew?—he might discover even in it the presence of bacteria! She had heard it said that a man with a theory finds examples of its truth in everything about him. Never mind! She would place beside it a cake of white castile and one of tar soap. Then, whatever his tastes, he must be pleased. She put the alcohol and a cologne-bottle within easy reach; got out smooth and rough towels and a bath-blanket; saw that the shower-bath worked; and, with a sigh of relief, went down-stairs to impress the cook that during the entire afternoon there must be plenty of hot water in the boiler.

Suddenly a happy thought struck her; she went into her husband's study and brought out every book on bacteriology that she could find. These she ranged on a shelf at the foot of the bath-tub. Standing out a little beyond the others, as if but just shoved in, was Mr. Smith's own pamphlet on "Bacteria." She was sure of the vanity of authors. He would at least take this down to see if any passages were marked, and might be lured into the perusal of some other books.

Mrs. Botkine pinned on the wall some colored illustrations of various forms of bacteria, and then surveyed the effect with the calm satisfaction of a general who foresees the success of his manoeuvres. She sighed regretfully that she could not bring herself to introduce into the room a few samples of the "germ culture" that her husband was carrying on, but she felt that she must draw the line at living germs.

She smiled again. To be sure, Mr. Smith might think her husband rather eccentric in pursuing his studies in this room, but he would certainly feel that he had found a congenial spirit in a man who could not tear himself away from his beloved bacteria even in his bath.

She had done all she could. With this virtuous feeling she was able to go about her occupations for the day, and in the afternoon even banished the thought of her expected guest enough to take a quiet nap.

She was awakened by a knock at her door, and the maid handed her a card bearing the seemingly innocent inscription, "Mr. Worthington Smith."

She was filled with a nervous fear, and her heart beat fast as she walked down the stairs. She lingered outside the drawing-room as long as she dared, and then, putting her trust in the

bath-room, walked in and greeted her visitor with a smile of timid welcome.

He did not look at all alarming. She was surprised to see that he was young, darkly handsome, and dressed with more regard to fashion than the scientific mind generally deigns to bestow. He saw her timid air and blonde beauty with evident admiration.

After the first polite commonplaces, Mr. Smith smilingly observed: "Professor Botkine's recent researches have been of such interest to scientific men that they must lay him open to a great deal of persecution from inquiring admirers, but——"

"Oh, not at all!" she answered, rather incoherently; "or, rather, I should say, he *likes* to be persecuted—that is" (with some confusion), "he will be delighted to find you here when he returns. He was so sorry that he had to go to town for a few hours. In the meantime, I hope that you will let me look after you."

Mr. Smith thought that he should like nothing better, but contented himself with remarking:

"Thank you, very much. Perhaps you would be so kind as to explain to me a few things I should like to know about Professor Botkine's theories on bacteria."

He was surprised to see a deep flush and a look of distress come over her face, and, before she could answer, he hastened to add: "But I fear that I am trespassing on your time. Pray, do not let me incommode you. I have some uncut pamphlets in my satchel here, and will look them over as I wait," and he looked down embarrassed.

A furtive feeling of relief crept for a moment into her eyes. Then the thought that she could not be guilty of such inhospitality as leaving her guest to shift for himself forced itself upon her. But here he was, plunging into science the very first thing and turning shy besides. Oh, she *must* send him off to that bath! It seemed rather awkward, but she nerved herself to the effort.

"No, Mr. Smith," she said, gayly, "I am sure that I could not tell you anything on the subject, and I cannot think of leaving you here alone. You must let me make you comfortable. I know that after your journey you would like a bath."

He looked amazed and then embarrassed.

"Thank you, very much, Mrs. Botkine," he stammered, "but I do not care at all for a bath. I shall do very well here, and——"

"No, no!" she said, nervously; "I know that you are only afraid that there is no hot water on such a warm day, and you do not wish to give trouble."

He put out his hand and tried to interrupt her, but she shook her head and went on rapidly:

"It is all ready. Everything is in the bath-room, and I will ring for James to show you up."

He looked thunderstruck at her insistence.

"But, I assure you, Mrs. Botkine," he exclaimed, "it is not at all worth while. I——"

"Not another word, if you please, Mr. Smith. You will really annoy me if you refuse."

As the man-servant appeared, she said:

"James, take this gentleman's satchel to the guest chamber and show him to the bath-room."

Mr. Smith endeavored to hang back and say something, but Mrs. Botkine smilingly waved her hand toward the stairs and walked into another room.

As he followed James, Mr. Smith remarked to himself that before this experience he would have vowed that she was too pretty to be eccentric. He had no wish to bathe, but, fearing to vex her, meekly proceeded to perform his ablutions.

She, meantime, was vastly relieved. She smiled to herself at the thought of how unwilling he had seemed to give the slightest trouble.

"I suppose he thought we Americans never had any decent facilities for a bath," she reflected. Then: "He really is remarkably good-looking, for a scientist. If I had not known what he was, I should have thought he was just a nice young fellow and rashly tried to get on with him. Oh, if George had not told me in time!" She shuddered as she thought of her escape. "I suppose he will be dried-up-looking before long. But how delightful that Mr. Smith did not fathom my ignorance!"

She was so elated that she went to the piano and sang for a half-hour.

She was startled by hearing some one come rushing into the room behind her. She wheeled on the stool and encountered the gaze of Mr. Smith, who stood before her, looking decidedly uneasy.

"I beg pardon for interrupting you, Mrs. Botkine," he said; "but I wish to thank you for your kindness and to make my adieux."

"Why, Mr. Smith——" she began, but he waved his hand apologetically and continued :

"I am very sorry not to have found Professor Botkine but perhaps I can come again. There is just time for me to catch the five-o'clock train."

It was her turn to be astonished. She opened her lips to speak, but he went on, nervously :

"Pray forgive my leaving you so abruptly. Thank you very much. Good afternoon," and, bowing profoundly, he was gone.

For a moment she felt stunned. Then a flood of questions poured through her mind. Was the man insane ? Or what had she done to offend him ? What would her husband say ? What was there in science to turn an apparently "nice" young man into such a distraught savage ?

"Ah ! recommend me to a plain, commonplace man who has not bacilli on the brain !" she sighed.

The rest of the day seemed endless, but at last she descried Professor Botkine, and with him a rather desiccated and "dug-up"-looking man.

"Oh, dear !" she moaned ; "there is another scientist, I know to look at him. What will *he* do, I wonder ? Dissect my cat, or say that he can not dine with us because he never eats anything but bacteria ?"

"Here we are at last," said the professor ; "I found our friend on the train. He had mistaken the train and gone to Alameda. Mr. Smith, let me present you to Mrs. Botkine."

She welcomed her guest cordially, but the minute she was alone with her husband, she seized him by the lapels of his coat.

"What joke have you been playing on me ?" she demanded ; "who is this Mr. Smith ?"

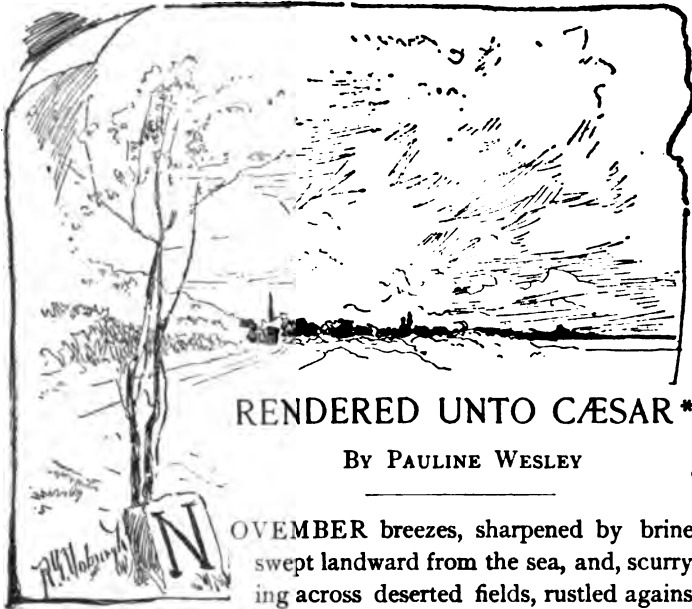
The professor looked astonished.

"Why, my dear, there is no joke. This is the Mr. Smith that I told you I was expecting this afternoon. What is the matter ?"

"Matter," she cried ; "who is the Mr. Smith that came here this afternoon with a satchel, and asked about your theories ?"

"Why, we met him at the station. He had a few specimens to show me. He is the son of my friend, Commodore Smith, of San Francisco. He had just run over for a short call."

"A short call," she echoed again ; "what will he think of me ? I sent *him* upstairs to take that bath !"



RENDERED UNTO CÆSAR *

BY PAULINE WESLEY

NOVEMBER breezes, sharpened by brine, swept landward from the sea, and, scurrying across deserted fields, rustled against a window near whose shelter Miss Minervy Whitten sat in a rocking-chair knitting some woollen mittens. The flurry sometimes pierced this woman's speech when her confidential monotone now and then arose.

At an opposite window Ann Eliza Appleby swayed in unison as she silently planted firm, swift stitches on a square of silken patchwork. If no plainer sewing asserted itself, Ann Eliza proffered little gifts of fancy-work among acquaintances.

The room was a wide, old-fashioned one, full of the pale light that sunless afternoons scatter along autumnal coasts. The only bits of brightness over its surface gleamed in andirons on the hearth underneath the duller variation of a lofty mantel's ornamental Staffordshire. Most of the polished chairs stood against the wall like veterans trained to discipline; and there were braided mats ranged in orderly lines up and down the room, on one of which Miss Whitten's plump, gray kitten purred resignedly.

From an outer survey the house was a wooden, gray, unpainted structure, standing on a wind-swept waste of land, three miles westward from the nearest village.

It was Minervy's house; Miss Appleby—its only other occupant—possessed her own ideas concerning its inner workings, though the vital things were deeply hidden, with a guilty, self-abasing consciousness, beneath substantial layers of genuine

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gratitude. The thankfulness in Ann Eliza's nature—gradually developed since the moment when her orphaned infancy had coaxed the Greenwich folks to reach out helpful hands—was rendered wonderfully sturdy by continuous growth. Throughout her childhood she had been a vaguely adopted daughter in the Barrett family,—one of the wealthiest of the township—and as the wear of time and death finally blotted out the erstwhile fold, it was deemed a very sensible proceeding for Minervy Whitten to drive over the moors in her high-topped chaise and offer her friend a home. Still, with the first unfoldings of benevolence, people began to reason from an inductive process; so it naturally happened that a ratio of returning obligations had been everywhere expected. Messengers were hurried to "Ann 'Liza Appleby" if the slightest trouble threatened surrounding habitations; and there was an element more acceptable than sheer



indebtedness in the patient ministry that spent itself at every new demand. Years ago a small community had taken a little interest in her youthful needs, but Ann Eliza's payments to the State at large, were one continuous round of separate compensations.

It was Minervy's house; the other woman assisted with the

work and thought her thoughts while gravely listening in the intervening leisure.

She was listening now: "It's astonishin' what an amount of gossip about her mother an' father that Day girl's weddin' has started up. Hopeful Tailer says that Phœbe Barrett never cared a fig for Lucien Day. She says anybody who knew 'em after they moved to the city, could tell us the marriage wasn't a happy one. Land! you could have knocked me over with a feather. 'What!' says I, kind o' to draw her out, 'tickled as Mr. Barrett was to have his daughter make so good a match, it'd be pretty funny if it didn't suit all hands.'

"But Hopeful insisted one of her cousins heard through somebody else, that Phœbe only married Lucien kind o' to please her father; an' one of the servants told around how Phœbe died because she didn't seem to try to live after the baby was born."

Each of the heads bent above the needles showed a streak of parting down the centre of its iron-gray; but Ann Eliza's profile had a comparative delicacy—the probable resultant of habitual gentleness and pensive acquiescence. Both were plain, colorless faces, whose severe expressions seemed to blend with their environment of neutral-tinted sky and sea.

"Well," the murmur finally continued, "Phœbe's husband saw consid'erable disappointment 'fore he died, if all the talk is true; an' I hope their daughter'll be more fortunate."

Some latent motives skulked behind Minervy's words, yet Ann Eliza sewed unswervingly, although her pulse had quickened. All was startling news to her—surmises floating aimlessly as thistledown, and the vagrant rumors modulated to a hum of indefeasible conviction.

Miss Whitten's knitting-needles clicked impatiently. "You were there at the time of Phœbe's weddin', wa'n't you, Ann Eliza?"

The patchwork gave a sudden lurch, like a ship at sea.

"No," came the slow response, "I—I wasn't." The women always talked across a little chasm of reserve and mutual self-absorption. "I'd planned to spend the spring over to Tellerville with the Williamses, an' they had a lot of sewin'. Phœbe urged me to come, but I couldn't seem to get away. I—I never saw 'em together after they were engaged."

Between the lagging sentences, and during the sudden hush which followed in their wake, Ann Eliza pictured a bridal dress

that had lain upon her knees, a shimmering mass of whiteness, through remotely beautiful June days. This vivid recollection, pressing against a newer trouble which was most disheartening in its possibilities, made her senses whirl. She forgot her surroundings for an instant, and might have adjusted herself to all contingencies had a longer respite been allowed; but a nicely organized idea, cheered by years and years of slumber in Minervy's brain, found its wings at last. The culprit who had harbored it faltered as it darted forth, and she looked away from her companion toward the Glenwich steeples, all astir with bashful ecstasy. "Nobody ever hinted it, Ann Eliza, an' I guess you wouldn't have liked to had me said it; but I used to think, once upon a time, that Lucien Day was sort o' fond of you. Mebbe, if all pa'ticulars had turned out different, you would have been his wife instead of Phœbe."

Every tightened cord in Ann Eliza's nature answered the sweeping touch. Even her countenance was enlivened by a vibrant pink that went or came with each quick breath as she hopelessly groped about for counterfeits of refutation. "Minervy!" she said reproachfully, "Minervy! you musn't—think such things. The idea! am I a-goin' to the daughter's weddin'? Well; if 'twas so, don't you s'pose I'd try to go? If—if 'twas so, don't you know that I'd just long to look into the church and get a peep at—Lucien's child? 'Taint—'taint likely I'd stay at home when everybody else is goin'."

A long silence ensued. "That's so," Minervy replied at last, engulfed in sheepishness. "That's so; I know it. I wondered you didn't seem to care to go. They say she's a beautiful girl, an' I guess her uncles 'll give her an elegant weddin'. Hopeful hinted to know if you was invited to the reception, an' I told her 'Mercy, yes!' I said most of the Glenwich folks were only asked to the church, kind o' compliment'ry, but that *you* was expected to send a present."

There proved to be no time for further apology; the closing words were hardly out of the speaker's mouth before a light-wheeled vehicle shot into view above the corner of the cliff-girt road beyond the eastern windows. It was driven by one of the Glenwich boys. Minervy left her seat as soon as the carriage flecked the horizon, and Ann Eliza rose too, more composedly, but with a certain vigor of expectancy. "He's a-comin' for me," the latter remarked. "I guess his mother's fever is higher. You'll have to set the bread. An' don't be expectin' me back

till I send you word." At the same moment she quietly moved around the room making sundry preparations here and there.

Minervy stood and watched the straight-lined figure, aware of a secret admiration not unmingled with an indefinitely passive disappointment. She was trying to remember that the prettily embellished veil of her romanticism, through whose fragile halo she had often contemplated Ann Eliza Appleby, was ruthlessly torn asunder. But she silently offered the necessary assistance, and she waited at the door when the other woman mounted to her place and was slowly borne away across the hardened, grassy slope that curved, unbroken, like a bit of gray-green sea, from the distant roadway to the Whitten threshold. She stood straight and silent. There seemed to be nothing but a breezy emptiness stretching south and west, save where a far line suggestive of low blue hills and vague little spires marked the village borders. The only objective point for Minervy's vision was the retreating open gig with its silent burdens poised unsteadily on the dreary landscape.

From a different point of view Ann Eliza, glancing backward, could behold, the weather-beaten house squarely shaped against the paler sky, and the motionless form of its owner. She felt a wild, unreasoning desire to call across the lengthening distance some brief sentence that could conquer all deception. For the first time in her life she saw the lonely shelter fade behind her, thrilled by a gentle rising, almost tremulous regret, although the fleet perception had no power over her mind, which, already interlined by anxious thoughts, was too preoccupied for loosely wrought impressions.

While the swift winds brushed her face and the Glenwich boy sat stolidly contented in the midst of his duty, her imagination sometimes fluttered above the village gossip's disturbing tattle and she found herself seizing upon the coming wedding with an unexplainable persistency. Once or twice she even wondered what Minervy would think should she finally change her plans and take a trip to the city on purpose to view that stately ceremony. She could go if she wished; the sense of freedom embraced in the wandering thought gave an instant joy. But in all her ruminations she never allowed herself to consider Lucien as a central factor. Ann Eliza's mental barriers were the strictest sort of boundary-lines. It was of Phœbe Barrett whom Hopeful Tailor had whispered such bewildering affirmations; and the brilliant, softly-rounded figure timorously evolved was

Phoebe's daughter. Nevertheless, her mind, scarcely acknowledging a change, constantly reverted to the other wedding—Phoebe's wedding—till she sat breathless, unsmiling, rigid in her helplessness. "It might have made a little difference," she finally acknowledged to her inner self, "it ought to have made a difference in spite of—everything. I—needn't have gone away. But nobody explained. I thought she loved him, her father told me she loved him." And the pathos of a worthless sacrifice seemed gradually to formulate itself as if it were some wholly new conception casting strange, thick shadows over her solitude.

The bustling village, with its tall, leafless trees and freshly-painted houses, was a poor abiding-place for revery. Hurrying teams were always clattering around the corners and darting back again, bewilderingly indifferent to a little forethought. The town inclined to be enterprising in a florid, wholesale manner. Only amidst the disquieting watches of an invalid's room could Ann Eliza sometimes snatch a retrospective interval throughout the ensuing week. Ignoring the restless queries of her own con-

cerns, she answered other people's questions, stepping to and fro, constantly alert, yet full of a quiet, restful tenderness. "You're sittin' here, Ann 'Liza?" doubtfully murmured across the darkness numberless times, always met with a reassuring answer; but Ann Eliza occasionally paused at a certain window which happened to overlook the forsaken Barrett mansion, and here, quite unknown to any one, she caught some little glimpses of the past.



A deep, old-fashioned garden crossed her prospect. It was full of faded snowball and syringa bushes which had continued to

weight themselves with bloom, unfeelingly regardless of departed eyes; they seemed to tell that it was not the garden's fault if the heirs to its exuberance had never shown a leaning toward provincial life.

Several stone-embordered turrets somehow gave the house a

sumptuous air. Ann Eliza stared at them solemnly. Their slender heights, enveloped in sun, mysteriously recalled the noon on which she had driven away "to Tellerville" in order to leave no barrier across the path of Phœbe's happiness. Her private regrets had always been eliminated, and they would not now have checked that departure were it not for the prodigal waste involved in its result; but all the simple, inborn economy of her Puritanic nature was suddenly in revolt against the pain which might have been spared her younger self. On cloudy days the uppermost branches of some trees beyond the turrets were so faintly embroidered on the sky as to suggest the immutable tracery in moss-agate. Every subtle phase encircling the house and grounds appealed to her reminiscence with a tender pathos.

Yet the space that separated vanished years from the less significant later moments was a wonderfully shallow one. Wherever Ann Eliza moved, the formal wording of a very modern wedding invitation sung itself in her brain; and an irregular foolish impulse beckoned her out of herself despite the theories that time and judgment had instilled. It became at last wholly impossible to detach her bewildered personality from some essential share in the little pageant whose solemnity her analysis had resolved into the closing scene of something half mysterious and full of cloistered meaning. Quite often she would linger at the invalid's gate with inquiring visitors and heard them plan their journey to "the Day girl's weddin'."

As if in alliance with fate, the dawn which ended her patient vigils in the darkened room also introduced the day appointed for these nuptial ties. The sudden release seemed to possess a kind of alchemistic property, for it startled Ann Eliza Appleby into a freewill agency, so that instead of going back to Minervy Whitten's house, she took a roundabout course in an opposite direction—a manœuvre which finally left her on the threshold of the Glenwich railway station. All the other guests had chosen an earlier train, and there was no one present to remark or question. She was vain of her new capacities, but the unavoidable noise and hurry attendant on embarkation filled her with nervous dread. The morning brightness of the ample vistas flashing into sight and then swiftly receding athwart the lonely tour, awoke no answering gleam within her serious eyes. She was almost overwhelmed by the daring step she had taken; she hardly knew her own identity.

When the city was finally reached, she drifted aimlessly along

the crowded pavements. She stared at the bordering windows gay with merchandise, but their contents only meant a senseless haze of gorgeous coloring. It was nearly noon before she started to find the church described on the wedding-cards, and she walked steadily, tense of muscle and strong with the feverish strength of anxious interest. Her hands were tightly clasped in an old fur muff. The day was wonderfully bright and cool; sunshine streamed across the flagstones with an almost blinding splendor. A blue and white striped awning that arched the gate at the end of her pilgrimage was bathed in a yellow glory; and the plain, dark carriages pressing about its entrance caught and held the sun like ducal chariots. In Ann Eliza's mind this wedding was so closely linked to Phoebe's that her progress along the carpeted steps seemed weighed down by sorrowful despair. She gave no thought to her homely attire, nor had any glances for the lightly-rustling groups of women crossing the vestibules at either side. It was a part of the self-repression engendered by her youth's vicissitudes, which taught her—after the first sharp pang—to think pre-eminently of Phoebe when contemplating the general failure of her own goodwill.

Once past the final doors she deftly evaded the youthful ushers and gained a shadowy nook in one of the rear pews close to the central aisle. All the vast, crowded interior throbbed with questioning, low-toned organ notes. She listened motionless, awed by the hushed, expectant air. She had never sat in so large a building. Somewhere in the distance there were great banks of lilies gleaming whitely. Children in an adjoining pew stole curious glances at her solemn visage, which was crowned by a spray of purple clematis perched at its usual angle on the last year's bonnet, where its color brought into clear relief the pale simplicity of her face and hair.



Between the moments of fervid introspection she searched apprehensively for Hopeful Tailer and familiar Glenwich heads, but they all appeared to be lost in the reaches stretching beyond

her. The music was wonderful—sad and tranquil, yet full of weird, uncertain strains that challenged her reasoning powers.

"It was all a mistake," she pondered a little wearily, as if in response. "There wasn't any one to blame. Phœbe didn't know the reason I went away; I shouldn't have felt obliged to go if I'd understood. I thought they'd be happy; I wanted 'em to be happy."

Now and then, amid the clamorous calls on her memory, she thought of Minervy alone in the old square room by the sea, grimly silent over her knitting; the woman seemed an incongruous figure leagues removed from the present atmosphere, but Ann Eliza banished her half reluctantly and not without a remorseful throb. Suddenly, without any special warning, the great instrument of sound in the gallery paused suggestively, then thundered forth its volume of latent power. With the silent, swift opening of doors a faintly breathing thrill swept over the church. Then some slender girls passed two and two along the aisle, diffusing right and left the fragrance of their rose-colored flowers. All the little preludes were so quietly made that the one troubled spectator in the rear pew could only grasp the fact that "Phœbe's daughter" had brushed close beside her and was now slowly receding, a radiant mist of tulle-enveloped purity.

Barely a word of the marriage service broke upon Ann Eliza's comprehension, because there was such a murmur of bygone voices in her ears. Once it was Lucien Day's reproachful, questioning tone that chained her thoughts; but oftener Phœbe Barrett seemed to speak, or Phœbe's father; and sometimes beneath the three, there rose a compassionate, mediating undertone from all the people who had helped her in her childhood helplessness. She was partially deaf, but her eyes were wide and keen as she waited breathlessly for a glimpse of the young bride's face. It came at last—a long unobstructed view, wherein a small blonde head, resembling a cameo brightened by sun, moved regally down the aisle; and there was something about the innocent countenance facing Ann Eliza Appleby that dawned upon her like a fantastic revelation. For the face was Phœbe's, while its joyous contentment, which peeped shyly forth in the sensitive curves of the girlish mouth, also seemed a part of distant years. Even the music had grown tumultuous and jubilant in its confident face. Ann 'Liza scarcely breathed. She instinctively felt that no shadowy suppositions black enough for doubt to build

upon threatened the trustful brightness of this little procession. The unexpected glimpse of Phœbe's face with the light of a smile upon it was a curiously sweet surprise. Swayed by the stirring moment, Ann Eliza cheerfully spurned all idle implications of mistake and failure.

"It wasn't true, after all," she reflected in the first sweet flush of awakening. "An' I always knew she loved him. Her father told me she loved him."

The comforted woman never questioned the intricate means by which her understanding welded the brightness illuminating the daughter's bridal to the sundered particles of Phoebe Barrett's happiness; nor did she care to analyze her own part of the triumph necessarily included. Nevertheless, she was able to revel in that sense of justifiable sacrifice which turns the smallest self-denial into something pleasant. A real personal pride in the beauty of the girlish figure disappearing beyond the threshold, and in every detail that had made the services impressive, took possession of her willing being and crowded out the former anxiety. She heard the din of hurrying carriage wheels and clamorous voices sifting through the open doors, and softly laughed beneath her breath. It thrilled her to think how closely she was related to all this parade and splendor. As she slowly made her way across the outer hall in advance of the crowding multitude, her eyes alighted upon a wisp of orange blossoms that had fallen from the bride's bouquet. Stooping, she caught it up with the swift, unconscious movement of a child. There was a faint smile on her lips when she afterward stepped along the street in the bright November sunshine. If a thousand Hopeful Tailors had been near enough to whisper insinuations, they would have gained no credence, so final was her revulsion of sentiment.

She had come to the city impelled by morbid dissatisfaction, quickened above a natural curiosity through her sense of responsibility for issues accidentally inferred; and she was returning almost joyous over her relief of mind. Thus exempt from worryment, she began to think more undividedly of Lucien Day, and wondered that she had forgotten how easily he would have won a wife's affection. It was now a triumphant gratification to recall some pleasing trick of voice or manner which had slyly preserved itself in spite of time. If some one had told her that she was unlike the majority of women in this simple abnegation of all personal preference, she would have politely respected the

sentiment while secretly doubting its ingenuousness. Hidden within the old beaver muff her folded hands trembled around the vagrant bit of orange-bloom astray from its rightful post of honor. She was breathing quickly. Such intensity had marked her interest that for the moment it seemed as if the newly wedded bride were her own young daughter, and that she herself had somehow gazed with Phœbe's eyes.

The journey home began at an hour that was likely to be unpopular with Glenwich inhabitants. Ann Eliza took the precaution to travel as far as Tellerville before she emerged from seclusion, and was eventually driven back to her native village like a casual visitor completing a neighborly call. There was delay concerned in the stratagem, so that twilight was settling beneath the eaves of Minervy's house by the time the wanderer reached its covering. Remnants of the short, bright day bathed the horizon, framing this homestead's darkening outlines in a warm rose-coloring shaded into gold.

A driftwood fire had been kindled in the great, wide room. Ann Eliza, too fatigued to essay any information, sat in a chair before the hearth, and Minervy Whitten, at variance to the usual rule, waited upon her, apparently oblivious to speech or silence. The impalpable gray outside the eastern windows crept through the panes, mingling with a yellow light from the tinted west, across whose pallor darted flickering shadows and occasional keen rays sent by the logs. Minervy made some tea while the other woman slowly removed her gloves, and rocked, resting her head against the wooden chair-back.

When Minervy brought her the tea, she took the cup with a nervous movement that jostled the muff on her lap. As the furry thing rolled to the floor, the little withered spray of a feathery flower fluttered out upon the rug. The eyes of the two astounded women met one another in a sudden comprehensive gleam. Nobody spoke for a moment, then Ann Eliza began to sip her refreshing beverage between short breaths of mortification; and Miss Whitten, nearly benumbed by enlightenment and wonder, rescued the orange-blossom and laid it upon the table with a droll little insistency of self-possession.

"You'd better drink all the tea you can," she managed to say, struggling with a wayward smile. "It always seemed to me that a weddin' was terrible tiresome. You're real tuckered out, ain't you?"

Ann Eliza drooped before her companion's quiet elation.

"Minervy," she said, "you mustn't—notice. You needn't mention my goin'. I didn't intend to do it till the very last minute. 'Tain't—'tain't necessary to talk to Hopeful or to anybody about anything."

Minervy towered straight and slender against the western dusk. "I've never said a word," was the answer; "nobody



ever thought it but me. I always knew. I knew you'd want to go to the weddin'. 'Tain't likely I'd speak about it."

A faint red sprang to the other woman's face. "Hopeful didn't understand," she explained irrelevantly. "I've thought it all over. They were real happy. Phoebe was always dreadfully fond of him; her own father told me so. An' the daughter's weddin' was beautiful."

The fire was burning lower in blue, crackling flames. A great silence seemed to fill the house. "Ann 'Liza," Minervy said, "you an' I are livin' together an' 'twon't hurt us any to speak out freely just for once. Lots o' times it'll do you good to know that I understand."

"I don't know," the listener demurred. "It's—silly to think what might have happened if,—as you say,—all particulars had—turned out different. 'Tain't that I want to be sly with you,

Minervy." She spoke with a slow reluctance. "There isn't much to tell, anyhow. Lucien Day was always kind of pleased with Phœbe; but the Barretts thought he was takin' a fancy to me, an' so they asked me not to encourage him. Of course, I wouldn't refuse when they were giving me a home an' everything. That was why I went over to Tellerville."

Minervy Whitten stirred abruptly. "'Tain't nothin' to be ashamed of, Ann 'Liza," she murmured. "I don't know as I've ever told you, but"—her voice broke sobbingly—"I ain't ashamed to tell about my sailor that died in Naples. I went down to the quay with him when he sailed the last time. Nobody ever knew how fond we was of each other——"

But Ann Eliza interrupted in a strange little muffled tone. "Why, Minervy!" she cried gently, a soft glow flushing her face, "Minervy!"

Minervy turned at the words and came to a chair on the other side of the hearth. "I'm trying to say," she continued brokenly, "that—'tain't so very different, so far as the morals of it go,—whether the Lord took him away or whether—whether you had to give him up for another reason. 'Tain't any disgrace to you nor me."

A light seemed gradually to spread over Ann Eliza Appleby. For a long time she sat silently swaying back and forth, watching the shadows playing across the walls. She was wholly tremulous with an odd, sweet gladness. After a great while she spoke. "I know it," she said faintly. "An' I'm glad we understand; it makes us better acquainted. But out of respect to Phœbe I—I oughtn't to talk very much about it. An'—we mustn't tell any one, Minervy."

"Of course not," Minervy replied. "'Tain't likely we'll ever speak of it again. You needn't worry, Ann 'Liza; I shan't,"—and the soft pitch of her voice was almost a caress,—“I shan't never tell anybody."





STRANGE CAPTURE *

A Story of Burmah

By L. C. DIXON

IT was a lovely moonlight night as we sat, some half-a-dozen of us, smoking a last pipe on the deck of the good ship "Assam," homeward bound from the sunny East. Our conversation had turned upon thieves and their ways, and as we had most of us lived for many years amongst a people noted for their disregard of the laws of *meum* and *tuum*, and a wonderful facility for carrying out their designs, some strange experiences were related. Among the stories told was one of so strange a character as to be worth retelling in the narrator's own words.

It is some years ago, said he, that after many disappointments I succeeded in obtaining a Sub-Inspectorship in the Burmah Police, a semi-military force maintained by the British Government in a country where such an organization is indispensable for the proper maintenance of order.

An old friend of my father had assisted me in obtaining my commission, and I think that it was listening to his stirring yarns of adventures and hunting in that strange land that filled me with a desire to visit it, though many a day subsequently did I wish myself anywhere but in that fever-stricken and malarial place.

On reaching Rangoon I reported myself to my Chief, who, after welcoming me cordially, gave me instructions as to what I was next to do. The most important of these was to master the language, as until I could speak it my usefulness did not begin. I was to be stationed in Rangoon for a while to get into the routine of police life, after which I should be sent into the wilds somewhere, and there, unless I spoke Burmese, I should be utterly lost.

Accordingly I devoted all my energies to my task and, under the instruction of a *poonji*, made rapid progress. After six months' patient study I was able to write a report first-hand and converse with moderate fluency with my subordinates.

* Written for Short Stories.—Copyrighted.

About this time I received orders to proceed to Tavoy, a town upon the coast, some 200 miles distant, and there to relieve the sub-inspector, Smith, who was down with jungle fever. Three days later I arrived there by the steamer "Avajee," and took over charge. As Tavoy is the centre of a large district, a strong force is maintained there, and the process of taking over the arms, ammunition and other supplies, in the state of poor Smith's health, occupied some time. It was thus a couple of days before he was ready to start on his return to Rangoon, and in the evenings we spent together I obtained from him much valuable information as to the district and the people within it, knowing it would be of immense use to me thereafter.

On the eve of his departure he told me that there was one thing that I should know and that was what he called the mystery of the haunted well, which he said he had never been able to clear up. Upon my laughing somewhat incredulously, he shook his head and said that although he did not believe in ghosts any more than I did, there was, nevertheless, something here that he should leave to me as a legacy, the solution of which he would be one day glad to hear.

About ten miles from Tavoy, said Smith, was a village called Oukshi-chong, beside which was a small open plain. In this plain was a mound upon which a tomb had been built some time before, and on either side of it were a well and a banyan-tree. The poor villagers had for some time past been living in a state of terror, from a monstrous form, a spirit they called it, that would at times emerge from the well and roam around the village. Such was their fear that not one would venture forth after dark for fear of meeting it. Following their usual custom, they had sought to propitiate it with offerings of food, fruit, and rice, and they maintained that when this was neglected that some article or another would disappear from their gardens in revenge, sometimes their pumpkin vines being stripped and growing plants utterly destroyed. Smith had heard of this state of affairs and had endeavored to get to the bottom of it; and as the offerings of food were nightly made by the people and as regularly removed during the night, he naturally thought that there was some human agency at work. Accordingly, one night he hid in the banyan-tree, whose dense foliage afforded him perfect cover, and he declared that before he had been there long he had seen a form arise from out of the well, hover around for a while, and then disappear within it when he fired at it with his revolver.

He had examined the well, but beyond its being of considerable depth there was nothing peculiar about it. The water rose to within a few feet of the ground, and the sides were curbed up with well-fitted masonry, and quite incapable of affording concealment for the smallest animal, let alone a man. Quite at a loss what to think of it, and attributing it to the hallucinations of his fevered brain, he went home, saying nothing of his adventure. Since then, however, other reports had reached him which made him tell me the story, as he thought steps should be taken to get to the bottom of the mystery.

The next day Smith left and I entered upon my new duties, making a tour of my district. I found everything quiet except for certain strange robberies that were taking place, in many instances accompanied by murder, and when so by strangulation. The thief did not restrict himself to one place, but seemed to travel over a wide extent of country, and invariably confined himself to abstracting jewelry and other small articles of value. But so cunning was he that no trace could be found of his movements, and the police were in a great state of excitement about it. My visit put them, moreover, on their mettle, and I felt sure that we should hear something about him before long.

In the course of my rounds I arrived at the village of Ouk-shi-chong, and the sight of the mound with the well and the banyan-tree naturally brought back to me the story I had been told.

After the duties of the day were over, in the cool of the evening, the sergeant came over to see me and to indulge his Oriental longing for chat with his superior officer, and from him I heard much that was going on in the neighborhood. Naturally the subject of the haunted well came up, and he bewailed the losses of the village and the state of terrorism which prevailed. Only the night previous, he added, he had lost the pick of his poultry-yard, a cock that was invincible, for the Burmese are as fond of cock-fighting as ever our forefathers were. Had not one of his neighbors purloined it? I suggested. Impossible, was the reply; what! steal from the sergeant of police? No; it was the spirit of the well. But what could a spirit want with a cock? I asked. But here he had me, for the natives throughout southern Asia sacrifice a cock invariably in the course of their ceremonies, and the selection in the present case was not inappropriate.

On the following day I strolled over to the temple, which was

not far distant, and was invited by the priest to come in and rest myself; which invitation I accepted. After partaking of some fruit and finishing a drinking-cocoanut, I led the conversation up to the mysterious well, and in a hushed and solemn voice the priest gave me the following account of what he believed was the cause of all the trouble.

Some four years ago the then chief priest of the temple, who was a man well advanced in years, conceived the idea of building a tomb for himself, and accordingly selected a site on the summit of the mound near the well. After some trouble, for the natives have a superstitious horror of carrying out such a work, a Mussulman, named Abdul, a notorious rascal, undertook for good wages to do the work. Accordingly he excavated the space necessary for a chamber ten feet square, with a passage leading into it some eight or ten feet long, the idea being to brick up the chamber after the depositing of the body, leaving the passage-way, which again should be closed at the entrance. The work was accordingly carried out, but when called upon to finish the roof in the dome-like form usually affected, Abdul struck for higher wages, and refused to go on.

The priests, who considered Abdul's request extortionate and moreover savoring of sacrilege, took advantage of his being one day within the tomb to fasten the entrance, and told him that there he should stay until he agreed to complete the work. The old chief priest was rapidly declining and it was important that the work should be pushed on without delay, and they thought to bring the mason to his senses. Day after day he was kept in this horrible prison, fed with a little rice, which was pushed through an opening; but he was obdurate, actually raising his demand for the completion of the tomb. At length one morning the poor old priest was found dead on his mat, his throat cut from ear to ear: he had been foully murdered. Suspicion was of course directed to Abdul, and though they could not understand how he got out, the people clamored for his blood. The tomb was searched, and although the passage was blocked up as the priests had left it, there was no Abdul there: he had got out somehow, though when and by what means no one could tell. After the excitement subsided the funeral took place and the old man's body was laid in the resting-place he had designed for it.

Time went on and the incident was forgotten, when suddenly people began to say that the well by the tomb was haunted, and naturally assumed that it was the spirit of the murdered man and

did their best to conciliate it with offerings of food. The terror of these poor villagers was extreme, for to see it was death. One man rushed into his hut saying he had met it face to face; the next night he was discovered in his bed, dead, with a thin blue line round his neck, the starting eyes and protruding tongue indicating that he had been strangled. A child one day ran to its mother saying that it had seen the spirit at the well. The next evening the poor little body was found murdered like the other. Several similar incidents satisfied the people that it was the old priest demanding vengeance on his murderer, and they believed that any one interfering would surely die.

From what I heard I made up my mind that some rogue was at work, and connected the murders and robberies in the district with this so-called spirit, and was determined to capture it. Accordingly I resolved to see it for myself first of all, and fearing to alarm any one with my actions, I announced that I was going to ride over to a neighboring post, but after darkness had set in I cautiously returned by another route, and tying my pony up in a clump of trees a quarter of a mile off I reached the banyan-tree and hid myself in its branches. From where I sat I could see the well with the little saucers of rice left there by the priests. The time passed very slowly. Never did the hours drag as they did then, and I was beginning to get horribly sleepy, when a jackal commenced howling not far from where I was. I was just wondering how it was that nature had endowed it with so unmelodious a voice when it suddenly stopped, and in the dead silence that ensued so abruptly my attention was attracted to an extraordinary sound that came from the well. First I heard a splash of water and then a long, deep-drawn sigh! Ye gods! What was it? The sound at such an hour and under such conditions startled me most horribly, and I was conscious of a decidedly creepy feeling along my backbone, culminating in the stiffening of the hair of my head, and I felt as Smith told me he had felt himself, in a blue funk. Acting upon my first impulse I had drawn my revolver, but not wishing to repeat Smith's failure I restrained any inclination to use it, and watched quietly to see what would happen.

In a few moments a shadowy form arose from the well and appeared to stand on the low wall that surrounded it. In the dim light I could make out that it was something resembling a gigantic man, but with some sort of headdress resembling horns.

For some minutes it stood there without moving, as if making

a survey of the surroundings ; then, apparently satisfied that there was no one around, the ghostly form squatted down on the wall, and I saw it was a man. Putting up its arms it removed its headdress, which had given it the appearance of so great a height, and which was evidently assumed to deceive any villager who might happen to come that way. Reaching forth to the plates of food, it emptied them into a bag produced from under his garments.

The dawn was now breaking and I could distinguish the features of this strange visitor. Undoubtedly it was the Mussulman, Abdul, as his features were not those of a Burman, and his head had been shaved not long since, after the manner of his sect. He was a villainous-looking specimen, with a great bull-neck and a pair of shoulders that would have done credit to a prize-fighter.

My first idea was to descend and capture him, but I realized that the chances were all against me and that once alarmed he could reach his mysterious retreat and possibly escape. Just then from the neighboring clump my pony neighed, and like a flash, gathering up his headdress and bag of food, he was gone; he had dived back into the well. I at once slipped from my perch and rushed to the edge of the well, but there was nothing to be seen beyond that the water was somewhat disturbed.

I was quite at a loss to know what to do. That I had seen a man I had not the least doubt, but how or why he retreated into the well I could not understand. I lighted a pipe and had a thoughtful smoke. I was fairly puzzled, when suddenly a thought struck me, and turning round I measured the distance from the edge of the well to the tomb; it was twenty feet. Allowing eight feet for the thickness of the wall, about thirty feet would separate me from the inner chamber. Could there be any means of communication? Looking about, I soon found a long bamboo, which I cautiously put down the well, feeling along the side of the stonework. Lower and lower I went, when suddenly, sure enough, the resistance of the wall ceased and I could detect an opening, evidently a passage, and quite big enough to admit a man, as it felt to be about three feet square.

The mystery was solved. The man lived in the tomb, and issued forth disguised as a spirit, frightening the villagers from coming out at night, and under cover of the darkness he committed the unexplained robberies and murders I had heard of throughout the district.

Well satisfied with my night's work, I made my way to my pony and cantered off to complete my pretended journey. I had now to devise some means of getting hold of this human water-rat without asking that the tomb of the priest be opened, a proceeding which I knew would be regarded with distrust by his late congregation.

That evening, having hit upon a plan, I retired to rest as usual, and about midnight stole quietly forth, knowing full well that I should not run across any villager. I had on a long overcoat, in the pockets of which I had a pair of handcuffs, some strong fishing-twine, and a hunting-knife. Underneath I wore nothing but a native cloth around my loins, as I intended to penetrate the retreat of the spirit.

I reached my station in safety, unobserved, and then commenced my solitary watch. Before, however, I concealed myself, I carefully removed the platters of rice so that the Mussulman, not finding them, should depart for the village, leaving the well to my attention. I was now ready for action, my knife belted round my waist, with the handcuffs and fishing-line fastened to me so as not to impede my movements under water.

I had not been waiting very long when again I heard the sound of splashing followed by the long-drawn sigh, and then, as before, the figure appeared on the edge of the well. After waiting a little while it moved off in quest of the platters of food, and when he failed to find them a good round oath in Hindoostanee convinced me that my scheme had not improved his temper.

Without wasting any time, he moved off towards the village, and as soon as he was out of sight I came from my hiding-place ready for action. Taking off my coat and contenting myself with the minimum of clothing, I prepared for my voyage of discovery. It was unpleasant to think of, as I knew not what obstacles I might not meet in that dark, subterranean passage, but I had determined upon carrying out my scheme, so, muttering a brief prayer, in I dived.

I had no difficulty in finding the opening, and after exploring it for a few yards came back for a final breath and then went down for good. There was no room in the passage for a stroke with my arms, so I kept them stretched out in front of me to feel my way and protect my head, contenting myself with using my legs as a means of progression. At length, after what seemed to me a very long time, my hands struck a flat surface, and

groping around I found it was clear overhead. I shot up then and found myself in a small chamber, evidently Abdul's den.

In one corner was a mat with some clothing, and on a niche an oil-lamp burned, shedding a sufficiently bright light around. Scattered here and there were cooking utensils and a little fire-place, and hung on the walls were a couple of murderous-looking *dahs*—native knives. Beside them was something from which I recoiled in horror; a piece of twisted gut a couple of feet long with a loop at one end, evidently the strangling apparatus used by this villain in disposing of his victims.

Carefully putting the *dahs* out of sight, I proceeded to arrange my plans for the coming struggle. The man would come up as I did in the well-like opening, and would have to crawl into the room through an aperture in the wall. This was where my attack should be made. The water was a couple of feet below the level on which I stood and showed a surface about three feet square, and I decided to knock him on the head and if possible stun him, as I did not desire to risk a struggle with so desperate a character under such circumstances.

Suddenly the water was disturbed, and I had only time to dart across the floor for a *dah* and return when there was a gurgling and swishing of water and a dead fowl was flung into the room. Almost instantly a dark form appeared at the aperture, and without giving him time to rise I brought the back of the heavy *dah* down upon his head. He rolled over like a log, and I half regretted not having given him a chance to fight. However, the recollection of the murdered child, so vividly brought home to me by the sight of the strangling-cord, hardened my heart, and in a moment I had the brute handcuffed behind his back and his ankles lashed together.

In a few minutes he came to, and never shall I forget the look of astonishment succeeded by rage which came over him. His struggles were tremendous, and it was well for me that I had neglected no precaution for my own safety. His mind was set upon getting at the *dahs* which I had removed, and his eyes were turned from one place to another seeking them. After some minutes, finding his efforts ineffective, he lay still, panting for breath, occasionally letting off steam in horrible oaths in Hindoostanee and Burmese.

I now informed him that, although in undress uniform, I was a police officer, and arrested him for robbery and murder, and detailed to him one or two of his atrocities. His threats were

now turned to prayers and supplications, and he offered me untold wealth if I would but let him off. This put a new idea into my head, and upon searching I found various necklaces, bracelets, and packages of precious stones, the spoils of his chase, which he had made no attempt to conceal, believing himself to be absolutely secure in his retreat.

"Keep them," he urged, "keep them! You will be a rich man and I shall be free, and no one will be the wiser," and then he renewed his entreaties. His Oriental mind could not understand that I was not to be bribed, and he then fell into a sulky silence, evidently meditating escape.

It now remained for me to return the way I came, and I think I never less liked any undertaking than I did that dive back into the well. However, I got back to the fresh air somewhat scratched and out of breath, and resuming my greatcoat walked back to the bungalow, where I speedily got into clean clothes.

The next morning I summoned the village headman, the priests and other men in authority to the police station, and there recounted what had passed. The excitement was intense and spread like wild-fire, and after some consultation it was agreed that the tomb should be opened and the prisoner removed. Accordingly the bricked-up passage was torn down and we rushed into the tomb, but as soon as I entered it I recognized that it was not the room I had been in. There was evidently another chamber, and with heavy sticks we sounded the walls, and, sure enough, on the side next the well, detected a hollow sound. Quickly prying out one or two stones we made an opening, which disclosed the retreat with my captive lying as I had left him.

Entering with the sergeant, the headman and one of the priests, we examined the chamber and gathered up all the wealth that had been so dearly bought. The prisoner was then dragged into the daylight and at once recognized as the redoubtable Abdul.

It required all my authority and the assistance of the sergeant and constables to prevent the excited crowd from taking summary vengeance on our captive. At the first news of his arrest the relatives of the murdered victims gathered round and raised such an outcry that we considered it advisable to remove him at once to a place of safety, so, securing a bullock-cart, we took him off to Tavoy.

Here he made a clean breast of it, confessing to the murder of the priest and some half-a-dozen others, as well as the

mysterious robberies. The secret chamber he had discovered quite by accident. When he had been shut into the tomb he commenced, having his tools with him, to dig his way out, and suddenly found himself in it. It was evidently of ancient origin, having doubtless been a tomb once in ages past or a retreat of some sort. The exit by the well he found out, as one or two mud-turtles were in the chamber and he knew that they must have access to the open air; so after some search he came across the inner well and courageously dived down, and following the passage arose in the daylight.

Being struck with the security of this chamber as a retreat, he returned after stealing some provisions and a lamp, when he built up the opening from the tomb. Through the roof he made an opening for air and then commenced his depredations, and by assuming the disguise of a spirit or devil and playing upon the terrors of these simple villagers, he enjoyed perfect immunity. He acknowledged that he had now got together sufficient in gold and jewelry and was about to leave the country. He had one other robbery in view—the treasures of the temple itself—and in a couple of days he would have been gone.

Abdul was taken to Rangoon, tried and duly hanged.

I have run across some strange characters in Burmah since then, and have had some exciting adventures, but none made so great an impression on me as did the circumstances attending my first capture.



THE PORTRAIT OF PHILLIS CROMARTIE *

BY FITZGERALD MOLLOY



O'LIVER ORMAND, A.R.A., entered the big studio adjoining his house before ten o'clock in the morning. He was more carefully dressed than usual and his manner was less composed. He dried the brushes which had stood in water all night, mixed some paints, and fixed an easel midway in the room. On this he placed a portrait which he critically examined and severely judged; for on no previous work had he brought to bear such force of skill begotten of practice, experiment, and labor.

The canvas he surveyed represented a girl not yet in her twentieth year, the curves of whose figure were full, delicate, and graceful. From the shapely shoulders rose a firm and rounded throat, on which a small and beautifully-shaped head was delicately poised. The face had all the charm and softness, the hope and vivacity of youth; the complexion was dazzlingly fair, the rippling mass of hair red-gold, the nose straight, the chin peaked and dimpled, whilst the lips were small and pouting, and the eyes of a grayish green.

The artist looked at it from every point of view, his dark face changing expression continually, and then turned away impatiently, for his work by no means satisfied him. He walked about the studio feverishly, pausing now and then as if to hear a sound he expected, and finally glanced at his watch. It was now twenty minutes past the hour, and his sitter had not arrived. He went to a great window which opened to the ground and looked out at the garden. A flock of sparrows he daily fed were hopping about the grassy lawn, now brightened by the sunshine of this April morning; the spring green of budding shrubs and trees made delicate streaks of color against the red roof of a neighboring studio; at the far end was the tennis court, where

* A selection from "Temple Bar."

he had placed balls and rackets well within view for a purpose of his own.

Suddenly a bell rang loudly. He started and could scarce restrain himself from going forward; he waited, however, for a couple of minutes, when the door of the studio opened and the original of the portrait entered, calmly, deliberately, and with a self-possessed air, followed by her younger brother, who, when she was not accompanied by her maid, acted as *chaperon* during her sitting to the artist.

"I hope I'm not late?" she said, looking at a little jeweled watch set in a bracelet, and seeing she was half an hour behind the appointed time, "but the morning was so fine, Billie and I thought we would walk across the park instead of driving."

"I'm glad you're not later," Oliver Ormand answered, all traces of his impatience vanishing, and only signs of his pleasure at seeing her remaining.

"I told Phillis you'd be waiting," remarked the boy, "but she said it didn't matter."

His sister gave him a glance that might have annihilated one of his sex who had not the privilege of being her brother, but Billie taking no notice, turned away.

"Nor does it matter," replied Oliver Ormand, good-humoredly.

Phillis Cromartie took off her gloves, flung aside her cloak, and sat down in the arm-chair placed upon a dais. "I know the position I am to assume by this time," she said, in a voice that was clear and sweet, if somewhat cold and emphatic.

"I must strive to finish your face to-day," the artist remarked.

"Then I'm to stare at that plaster-cast hand in the corner?"

"If you please; the chin a little higher—thanks."

He set to work, and she began to think. How patient he was, and not in the least cross because she had wasted half an hour of time that was valuable to him. And how glad he felt to have seen her, even though they had met two days before; his eyes had given her a welcome which his lips had not expressed. He loved her, for he had told her so, and she liked him as well, nay, better than any other man, but she would not pledge herself to become his wife. Ambitious and energetic, she from an early age had determined to shape her own career and mount the social scale, indifferent to the feelings, and careless of the opinions of others. Oliver Ormand was an Associate,

some time later he might become an Academician, and as his wife she would be a person of importance in artistic circles. But there was another sphere in which she wished to reign. The artistic world was well enough in its way, but the aristocratic world was higher. A title carried weight, there was something in nobility that impressed, and she believed herself created to take her place in its ranks.

Nature had favored her with a shapely figure and a beautiful face. She had never experienced difficulty in winning the admiration she desired; her fortune was large, and her family had been people of gentle birth for generations.

She had the dangerous gift of imagination, which, wedded to ambition, fires the soul with fever. Therefore she had dreamed of being the centre and sovereign of a *salon* where she received royalty, influenced diplomatists, created cabals, overthrew governments, and was recognized as a powerful ally and a dangerous foe. The husband whose aspirations she was to stimulate, and whose worship she was to accept, often figured in these dreams as old and imbecile, but of ducal rank and of wealth beyond estimate; for love had little place in her heart, and for domesticity she cared nothing.

Quite recently she had met Lord Edgehill, who would one day inherit his father's title of Marquis of Bosworth. Before knowing who he was she had described him to her brother Jack as "a screamingly funny little man, all eye-glass and shirt-collar"; but on his being introduced to her as Lord Edgehill she had changed her mind regarding his appearance, in which she ceased to see anything ridiculous. Henceforth she set herself to rouse his admiration and to win his affection, if such was to be found in his nature.

Whilst Oliver Ormand worked in silence, Billie Cromartie, his hands deep in his pockets, wandered round the studio aimlessly, until coming to the window and catching sight of the rackets in the tennis court, he asked if he might knock the balls about.

"Certainly," said the artist, trying to conceal the pleasure he felt at getting rid of the lad.

"Thanks; we're going to play the Morelands in the afternoon, and I shall be glad to practice," Billie explained, as he bounded out on the lawn.

"Are you tired?" the painter inquired of his sitter.

"A little," she replied.

"Then you may rest for five minutes."

She looked at the canvas and smiled with an air of satisfaction. "Do you think it really like me?" she asked.

"I fear it doesn't do you justice," he replied.

"On the contrary, I thought it too beautiful, too much idealized for me."

"That is how I see you," he answered, his dark eyes fixed on her face lovingly, pleadingly.

"It has always been one of my ambitions," she went on, unheeding him, "to have my portrait painted and hung in the Academy, and now it is about being realized."

"Unless anything happens meanwhile," he rejoined lightly.

"What can happen?" she inquired seriously. "Another sitting or two and it will be finished, and as an Associate you are certain of having it exhibited. It would break my heart if anything were to prevent it from being seen at Burlington House."

"Then you may rest satisfied; nothing shall," he said.

"What you promise you do," she replied with a smile by way of rewarding him, "so that in another month I shall hang on the Academy walls, where friends will see me, strangers admire me, and crowds flock round me all day. I shall be talked of at dinner-parties and assemblies in town, and in the homes of our country cousins who visit the gallery. Then my name will be in the press, not only of Great Britain, but of Australia, America, and the Continent; and people whom I have never seen or may never see will read of me, and my name will become familiar to them. Is not that celebrity? It is almost power!"

No thought of the man whose work was to make her famous entered into her mind; there was no room there for any other image than her own.

"I did not think you were so ambitious," he said.

"Ah, you don't know me," she answered. "When I was a child I used to dream of becoming a great actress and of crowding big houses with my name. Then, as I moved before a vast and silent audience, all eyes were fixed on me, all ears were filled with my voice, all hearts were thrilled by my power, I triumphed above my rivals and somewhat disdainfully accepted the thunders of applause which were my due."

She laughed aloud at the picture.

"I suppose your mother wouldn't hear of you going on the boards," he suggested.

"Oh, mamma never had much influence over me. She has been an invalid as long as I remember, and she has no will of her

own. I have always acted on my own judgment. I abandoned the idea of becoming an actress on consideration, though I know I can act."

"And what is the dream that now fills your life?" the artist asked.

"Ah, I mustn't tell you," she answered, smiling at him.

"Don't you think," he asked in that low, earnest tone that always impressed her, "that true happiness lies, not in fulfilled ambition, but in loving and in being loved?"

"You are romantic," she said, evading his question.

"No matter what I am, I love you," he replied, beginning to quiver from excitement.

"You have told me that before," she remarked, watching the pallor of his face and the glowing brightness of his eyes with an interest such as an anatomist might feel in examining a fresh subject.

"I know I have; forgive me, I cannot help repeating it again and again, I love you," he said in a grave and earnest voice.

She made no answer, and he continued—

"Think how happy we might be in the future."

"Or how miserable."

He felt chilled, but overcoming the feeling he replied—

"Miserable we could never be, for I shall love you always."

She, with emotions scarcely stirred, looked on passively, analyzing her own feelings. His ardor flattered her, but she credited herself with the power of inspiring his affection. To be loved was a pleasure she appreciated, but to love as he did was an impossibility to her nature. She pitied him and almost experienced a faint sense of gratitude.

"Do you love me?" he asked breathlessly.

She hesitated a second, and then seeing his anxiety and being unwilling to pain him, she answered in so low a voice that it was almost a whisper—

"Yes."

"Then be my wife," he cried out jubilantly.

"No," she answered quickly, "at least not yet."

She reflected that she was still young and all the world lay before her. She must not bind herself, some great event might happen in her life. Why was she given these ambitious longings if it was not to foreshadow and prepare her for a high destiny? Then she thought of Lord Edgehill, who had danced with her three times on Monday night, and she knew he admired her, his eyes had assured her of that.

"You don't know how I love you; you don't know how I suffer!" Oliver Ormand continued—"When you are absent I long for you even though your presence is a torture; my love is so great and you are so cold."

"People who have loved as you have before marriage, became miserable afterwards. My father once loved my mother passionately, and now they have been separated for years. Marriage is binding; one should take care not to make mistakes," she said, speaking deliberately.

"Do you trust me?" he asked.

"Implicitly—but I don't trust myself."

"Perfect love casteth out fear," he quoted.

"Then I don't know what true love is," she replied.

"No, your heart is not yet awoken, but if you love me a little I will be satisfied," he exclaimed.

He was sitting on the dais at her feet; her left hand drooped by her side; he seized and covered it with kisses.

"We must wait, I cannot bind myself," she remarked.

"Waiting means torture," he said plaintively.

"Consenting might mean greater misery in the future."

He got up and walked to the other end of the room.

"I shall love you always; you alone," he murmured.

"Do you wish me to sit longer to-day?" she asked, glancing at the portrait.

"No. How can I work? I am all upset; my mind is confused."

"Then to-morrow?" she suggested.

"No, I must have time to recover and master myself so that this may not occur again. I plead in vain, I am miserable!"

"But you will finish it, even though I may seem unkind?"

"Finish it? Certainly. No matter what happens I shall always love you, I cannot help that, even if I would."

She went to the window and called Billie who was rushing about the tennis-court. Then, turning to the artist, she said—

"Shall you go to the Moncriefs' ball to-night?"

"If you will be there—yes."

"Oh, yes, I am going."

"You will keep me some dances?"

"Of course; come early and secure them."

As she followed her brother into the hall, Oliver Ormand once more raised her hand to his lips.

When they had gone he returned to the studio and walked

about restlessly. He knew that such affection as he gave Phillis Cromartie could never be returned by her, and with his love was mingled despair. Yet to become indifferent to her would be an impossibility. His nature was sensitive, his temperament more highly strung than his fellows, by reason of which he had suffered much through life, but never had he known such pain as this, where, stretched upon the rack of suspense, he was torn by doubt. He put away her portrait with its face to the wall, but he could not shut her image from his sight. He went into the garden and strove to read a magazine, but the words he read conveyed no sense to his mind. Tobacco failed to soothe him, and after lunch he set out for a long walk, believing that exercise would tranquilize.

At eight o'clock that evening the Cromarties sat down to dinner. An hour later Phillis retired to array herself in all the glory of a dazzling costume, for the ball did not begin till eleven, and she had therefore two hours to prepare. As she rose from the table her brother Jack, who was to accompany her, declared he would go round to his club and return for her in good time.

"Be sure you do not keep me waiting," Phillis said, with a warning gesture.

Shortly after eleven she came down to the drawing-room, where her invalid mother lay on a couch reading a novel. By Phillis's directions every lamp and candle in the apartment had been lighted that she might be seen with due effect. A shimmering mass of creamy gauze and delicate lace, with pearls round her throat and a rose at her breast, she entered, and going towards her mother playfully made a profound courtesy.

"My darling, how beautiful you look!" exclaimed the invalid, raising herself on her pillows.

"Don't I, mother!" the girl answered, gazing into a great mirror between clusters of waxlights.

Never had she looked more brilliant. Excitement had heightened the color of her fair complexion and given lustre to her grey-green eyes. The small head with its masses of red-gold hair was supported by a graceful throat rising from a bust white as alabaster and perfect in mould.

"There will be none there to compare with you," said the indulgent mother, glancing at her proudly.

"I think I am perfect. But where's Jack? I told him not to keep me waiting; if he begins by making me cross he will spoil my temper."

As she looked again in the mirror she saw the door open and her brother enter slowly. His face was pale and there was something unusual in his appearance that immediately arrested her attention. The thought flashed upon her that he had been drinking, and with an air of indignation she turned round prepared to stab him with a phrase. As he advanced into the room she saw, however, that his walk was steady and his manner collected.

"What is the matter?" she asked breathlessly.

"Something has happened to—to a friend of ours," he replied.

"A friend?"

"Yes, some one you know very well—a man whom you saw to-day."

"Oliver Ormand?" she said in a low tone.

"Yes. He is dead."

"How did it happen?" she asked in a voice which she strove to steady.

"In returning home this afternoon he was crossing Piccadilly at Hyde Park Corner, when a cart knocked him down and one of the wheels passed over his throat. He was carried to St. George's Hospital, but before reaching it he was dead."

Phillis sat down. It was by an accident then, and not by suicide, as she at first feared, that he had died. She was spared the remorse that might arise at thought of his self-destruction. He was dead, and he had kissed her hand but a few hours ago: the impression of his lips was still almost fresh upon the flesh. And he had loved her, aye, better than any man might ever love her again. His death was a sore loss.

Then she remembered her portrait. It would remain unfinished now, and could not hang upon the walls of the Academy as she had so long and so earnestly desired. That was a bitter disappointment. Another would be if his death prevented her from attending this ball, to which she had looked forward with pleasure for weeks; Lord Edgehill would be there, and he would look for her.

Must she lose this opportunity of winning him? That would be an injustice to herself which she could not permit.

"Come," she said, breaking the silence her mother and brother had kept, fearful of disturbing her.

"You surely don't mean to say you will go to the ball to-night?" cried Jack indignantly.

"Why not, pray? Mr. Ormand was not a relative."

"But he was a friend."

"If we are to remain at home because friends die, we should never go out," she replied, her eyes beginning to sparkle.

"Besides, people who knew he loved you will wonder," said Jack.

"No one will know I have heard of his death."

"But the men at the club told me."

"And they will naturally think you had more tact and consideration than to come and repeat this news, and strive to spoil my evening's amusement," she replied angrily.

"I didn't think——"

"No you never do until it's too late. Life is too short, and my pleasures, at least, too few to sacrifice this," she answered, sweeping indignantly across the room. Then stooping over and kissing the invalid, who looked pale and frightened, she said, "Good-night, mother; I'm going," and left the apartment.

"Jack, go with her, dear, or she will go alone," his mother whispered, and he obeyed.

During their drive Phillis spoke no word. She was vexed that her brother had told her this news, and indignant that her wishes should have met with opposition, no matter how slight. Most of all, she was afraid her annoyance should be noticed and her appearance spoilt, on this evening when of all others she wished to look to best advantage. On arriving at the Moncriefs' they could hear the strains of a band and the patter of feet. The whole house was ablaze with lights, and the hall and staircase crowded with palms and flowers. The effect somewhat relieved Phillis's humor; she resolved to banish the recollection of the last half-hour from her mind and to enjoy the dance as if nothing had happened. On the lobbies and around the door of the ball-room were groups of men who stared in admiration as she passed, and inquired who she was. The hostess received her with effusion, and presently a number of men whom she knew crowded round and asked her to dance. She did not quite fill her programme, but left spaces here and there which she hoped to fill with Lord Edgehill's name.

Soon she was in the midst of the dancers, whirling about to the delicious strains of a valse, a glare of lights spinning round her, the odor of a myriad flowers in the atmosphere, a face smiling down into her own, and all thought of what had just passed was erased from her mind. With feverish pleasure the night flitted

quickly, having but one drawback: Lord Edgehill had not yet asked her to dance, and was paying evident attention to a dark-complexioned girl.

Phillis felt indignant and hurt, but she experienced some relief when eventually he came and sat beside her and asked her for a valse. She received him coolly, and pretended to believe she was fully engaged, but on examining her programme saw she had no partner for one far down on the list. This she promised him, and he left. But when the time came to claim her he was beside her once more, and with his arm around her she whirled through the great room as if she were treading on air.

"I thought you would be here to-night," he said, when presently they moved at a slower pace; "I should have been much disappointed if you weren't."

"I was undecided about coming," she replied, in a tone of indifference, for she had not forgiven him his attentions to the dark girl; "I felt tired to-day."

"But I'm glad you have come. Isn't this dance delightful?"

"Yes."

She was looking over his shoulder, moving seemingly without voluntary action of her own, lulled by the rhythm of the music and the motion of the dance into a delicious feeling of pleasure, when, on raising her eyes, she caught sight of a face and figure passing at the lower end of the room. Suddenly her heart stopped, she relaxed her hold, and would have fallen but for her partner. He almost carried her to a seat.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I felt faint," she answered, after a pause; "the room is hot, and I am tired."

"Let me get you some water."

"No, thanks; but may I trouble you to find my brother. I think I had better go home." Her face was white and her heart fluttered wildly. Who or what was it she had seen? Her mind was confused; she could not, dared not think.

In a few minutes Jack was beside her; she took his arm and whispered, "Are you sure the news you told me this evening is quite true?"

"About poor Ormand? Yes, one of the men who mentioned it saw him knocked down. Why?"

"Because some one strikingly like him passed into this ante-room; let us see who it is."

The apartment she referred to opened from the ball-room, and

had no exit of its own. It was occupied by a half-dozen *chaperones*; no man was visible.

"I kept my eyes upon the door so that he could not have come out without my seeing him. Could I have been deceived?" she asked.

Jack made no answer, but looked grave.

"I feel faint again," she murmured; "take me away, take me home." She had to wait a considerable time in the hall before the carriage could get to the door. The music was still playing, the lights yet burning, a crowd of loud-voiced people were crushing past her, but she saw or heard nothing.

"If it were possible for him to know I had come here, having first heard of his death, what would he think?" she asked herself. And again came the thought, "He said he should love me always, and but a few hours ago he kissed my hand. No one will ever love me like him, nor do I deserve that any one should."

The newspapers next morning had full accounts of the accident which had suddenly cut short a career of promise. Phillis read the details with dry eyes, but she spoke no word. Again and again the thought of the man she had seen enter the ante-room at the Moncrief's occurred to her; and as often she dismissed it without coming to any conclusion regarding what puzzled her.

But during the evening a new light was thrown upon her mind which helped her to a decision. Whilst at dinner Jack mentioned having in the course of the afternoon met Hugh Moreland, who was about to send a big picture to the Academy.

"My portrait won't hang there now," Phillis said regretfully.

"Why?" asked her brother.

"Because it is unfinished."

"I think you mistake," replied Jack. "When I met Hugh Moreland he was going to poor Ormand's house, where he now lies, and we went together. Before leaving we had a look round the studio and saw your portrait. Moreland said it was the best thing Ormand had ever done, and examining it carefully he remarked how fortunate it was that it was quite finished."

Phillis heard in silence. Every word she had spoken to the dead artist during their last interview came back to her. A feeling of cold faintness passed over her, but she strove to retain consciousness and succeeded.

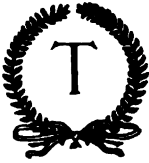
"It is quite finished?" she said with an effort.

"Yes."

"Then he has kept his word."

THE SILK CORD*

BY JOSÉ FERNANDEZ BREMON



HE noble Chao-Se was very unhappy. Nevertheless, his rice crop had been unusually abundant; the white flowers of the tea-plant filled his gardens; his silk cocoons were never richer; he was the lucky possessor of an autograph letter from the Emperor, in which could be seen the word *chaon*, a credential of long life; and, lastly, he had seen divided in ten thousand pieces the body of his enemy Pe-Kong, who had affronted him by cutting off his pigtail.

Why, then, had our noble Chinese ordered the image of Fo to be belabored with sticks, leaving a mere wreck of that deity standing amidst fragments of his former porcelain and imposing figure? And that evening, at supper, why had he disputed with his ancient cook the excellence of a magnificent dish of roast dog that all the guests had pronounced exquisite; disdained a cup of the finest Kyson tea; and paid no attention to his pet monkey, in spite of all his playful caresses?

"Respected kinsmen," said Chao-Se, gravely, after the meal had ended, to the three venerable Chinamen squatting at his side, "you all know that I had intended presenting my son at the court of our Celestial Kingdom."

The speaker and his hearers inclined their heads until their pigtails swept the floor, and it became necessary to remove the monkey, who imitated the action of these grave personages. Chao-Se continued:

"My son, Te-Ku, has not regarded my teachings; he does not know how to bend the body gracefully eighteen times in making our court bow, nor is he familiar with the unalterable forms of our celestial etiquette; he has rejected my old friend Ling's virtuous daughter, whose tiny feet could be incased in nutshells; and, let this astonish you, dear friends, defied by Chung, whose honored body now reposes in the tomb, he refused to dis-

* Translated from the Spanish, for Short Stories, by William B. Hale. Copyrighted.

embowel himself, while his adversary expired triumphant with his abdomen ripped open in the most approved fashion. In this disgrace I have called you together, being resolved to follow your advice as to the best means of saving the family honor."

"You should, above all, disinherit Te-Ku," said the eldest of the council.

"And divide your possessions among us," added the second.

"And as the family honor is tarnished a sacrifice is necessary," said the third. "You should strangle yourself in order that the reputation of our house may not perish."

Such was the decision of the council. Chao-Se now, too late, regretted having convoked it.

"What present is this you are bringing me?" asked the wife of Chao-Se that same night, noticing that her husband had placed a small ivory box upon the table of her room.

"Beautiful and dearly beloved Tian, I have a surprise for you," replied the noble Chinese, gallantly.

Tian gathered herself up on her couch, exposing to view a pair of tiny feet, some two or three inches in length.

"You have been a good wife," continued Chao-Se, kindly, "and I desire that you should figure in history as a model of virtue. Well, then, the family council has decided that I must sacrifice myself to restore our lost reputation, but as I have a certificate of long life from my sovereign, it would be an act of ingratitude on my part to cut short my own existence. I have therefore selected you, dear Tian, as my substitute, that you may save our honor with the silk cord you will find in that box. I am sure you will be grateful to me for this mark of distinction and proof of my deep affection."

"Sir!" exclaimed Tian, terrified, "I dare not kill myself. I am as timid as a chicken."

"Calm yourself, my dear; if you cannot do it alone, being as timid as a chicken, I'll get the cook to help you," and the noble Chao-Se embraced his wife tenderly and withdrew from the apartment.

Tian appeared calm; Kin, the cook, was uneasy.

"Kin," said she, "thou needest repose."

"I sleep little, my lady," replied Kin, rubbing his eyes.

"Thou shouldst have desires of enjoying in the next world the pleasures that have been reserved for thee."

"I am ignorant of what the great Buddha may have in store for me there."

"Dost thou wish to fly with me?" asked Tian, gazing lovingly at the poor cook.

"My lady!" exclaimed he, trembling.

"To fly from a house where they do not appreciate thy roasts, to unite thyself to me and become master of my magnificent jewels."

Kin kissed the floor to express his gratitude.

"Avoiding the vengeance of Chao-Se——"

"Oh, yes!" faltered the trembling cook.

"There is a way to accomplish all this. Thy master, Chao-Se, protected by the Emperor's decree, will yet live many years, during which time we shall be able to leave this earth and lose ourselves in space."

"I don't understand."

"It is very simple: I wish thee to accompany me in this last journey. Take this cord and hang thyself outside the door whilst I gather up my jewels and prepare to follow thee."

Kin opened his oblique eyes in horror. Tian gave him a languishing glance.

"Good-by," she said, "do not fail me," and pushed him gently towards the door, slipping around his neck the soft, silken cord.

As Kin left the apartment he heard a noise in an adjoining room. "It must be the monkey," he said to himself, and then continued, meditatively: "For two reasons I had better not kill myself: in the first place, because I have no certainty of reviving in the other world; and, secondly, because if I *do* come to life again the mighty Fo will be able to take vengeance upon me for the beating I have given his image."

Again the noise was heard. It was not the monkey, but Te-ku who made it, robbing the treasure-chest of his father. The garden-window was open; the jewels showed glitteringly through the open mouth of a sack. Kin, indignant, could not do less than reproach him for his conduct, at the same time revealing to him the predicament in which he had placed the family.

Te-ku implored him to speak lower, but Kin responded each time in a louder voice. At length the unhappy youth exclaimed, conscience-stricken: "Give me the cord; I am the true culprit, and to me should belong the sacrifice!" And making a noose in one end of the fatal cravat, he tied the other to the window-

frame, swung the bag of jewels to his shoulder for the expenses of the journey, and, embracing the cook affectionately, said to him:

"Go now, and leave me alone. I do not wish thee to witness my death agony."

Kin had not complete confidence in his young master, but did not dare disobey his command. As he descended the stairway leading to the garden he heard a heavy blow, followed by a peculiar squeak.

"Can he have fled?" Kin asked himself, doubtfully.

The garden was very dark, but a body hung quivering at the end of the cord. This Kin could see plainly, but he did not observe a dark form stealing away among the trees.

"I've got myself nicely out of that scrape," said Kin, with a sigh of relief, passing his hand pensively around his neck. After a few moments of meditation he entered his room, filled his pipe with opium, and stretching himself on his mat soon fell into a deep sleep.

The following morning at daybreak the relatives of Chao-Se, attired in white, the mourning costume of the Chinese, presented themselves at his house, prepared to render to his corpse the last tributes; but to their great surprise they found him awaiting them, also dressed in white, and maintaining a ceremonious attitude.

"What, still alive!" they exclaimed, indignantly.

Chao-Se then related to them all that had occurred: his scruples, the timidity of his wife, the substitution of the cook, and the voluntary expiation of his son. The others, after an animated discussion, agreed to accept this solution of the difficulty.

"Let us now go to the garden, into which nobody has yet entered," said Chao-Se, solemnly. "There we shall view the body of my unhappy son."

The committee made their way to the garden, but upon arriving at the scene of the catastrophe were stupefied with amazement. Suspended by the silken cord, and swinging to and fro like a pendulum, was the rigid body of a monkey.

"That is not my son!" exclaimed Chao-Se, horrified.

"Sir, I saw him place the noose around his neck," replied the cook. "Without doubt the monkey has fled in the figure of your son, leaving his own image behind him. There is something of magic in this—the divine Fo is avenged."

"No such thing," said the prospective inheritors of the estate, with decision. "It's the body of Te-Ku. Don't you see the resemblance to the father? It is his very image!"

"But, gentlemen," protested Chao-Se, defending himself, "look at that mouth!"

"It is your own, noble Chao-Se," replied the others.

"And those ears——"

"Are identical with yours," and in a whisper, "*Remember that a victim was required!*"

The distinguished Chinaman admitted at length that the body was that of his son, although certainly somewhat disfigured.

Consequently, the death of Te-Ku was officially certified to, the remains were given a magnificent burial, and the family council declared the honor of the house of Chao-Se to be fully re-established.

EPILOGUE.

In spite of the certificate of long life, Chao-Se survived his son only a few months. Then came to take charge of the inheritance a young man who claimed to be Te-Ku, and declared that he had fled from the paternal mansion some time before, jumping from the garden window and scaling the wall.

The case having been submitted to the highest tribunal in the land, a learned mandarin rendered the following decision, which is still a precedent in China to settle disputes of a similar nature:

"The death and burial of Te-Ku having been legally proven,

"No one having been missed from the house of Chao-Se on the night in question except a monkey, whose whereabouts are now unknown,

"Be it decided, therefore, that if the claimant speaks truly in regard to the flight he can be no other than the monkey;

"And if he has failed to speak the truth he deserves to be executed with the cord that the relatives of the deceased still retain in their possession."

In this alternative Te-Ku decided to declare himself a monkey, and was forthwith handed over to a travelling mountebank.

THE PRINCESS AND THE REPUBLICAN*

BY ANTHONY HOPE



It was very rarely that the Princess could contrive it, but to-day her tricks had triumphed. The equerry was seeking in one direction, the lady-in-waiting in another, the pages in a third, the footmen in a fourth; and the Princess, merrily smiling, walked alone through the wood which fringed the edge of the stream. And there—because it was so pre-ordained—she found the Republican, lying full-length on the grass, preparing a speech in attack on the policy of the king. Just as he mouthed out a fine passage, the Princess came to a stand opposite him, and the Princess laughed.

The Republican sprang to his feet and bowed very low.

"I thought, sir," observed the Princess, "that you accorded no deference to rank."

"Nor do I," said the Republican, bowing again very low.

"It is, then, because I am a woman?"

The Republican pushed his thick hair from his forehead, hesitated a moment, and fixed a glance on the Princess's eyes.

"Merely that," said he; and the Princess blushed.

"Sit down," said the Princess, seating herself on the grassy bank. The Republican obeyed her.

"Why do you say such hard things of my father?" asked she.

"Because he is a king."

"Does that hurt you?"

"Does it not hurt you, madame?"

The Princess looked at him inquiringly.

"I have seen you often of late in the city," said the Republican. "Perhaps you have seen me?"

"I saw you being led to prison the other day," smiled the Princess.

* A selection from "The National Observer."

"One sees strange things in the city," remarked the Republican, composedly. "Only to-day I saw a strange thing."

"Pray, what was that, sir?"

"The photograph of an ugly dolt," said the Republican. "It is in all the shop-windows."

"I would be angry if you were not so foolish," said the Princess.

"And I would be just if he were not——"

"A Prince?" interposed the Princess, hastily.

"Let us say that," agreed the Republican. "In cold truth, he is but a fool, as most men are, and no uglier than some."

The Princess rose, courtesied, and sat down again. The Republican drew himself a little nearer to her.

"It is a marriage of affection—so they say," said he.

The Princess took no notice of this remark.

"When you were a boy," she said, "you were not angry with me for being a Princess."

"I would not be angry, if I were still a boy," said he.

The Princess assumed an air of sedate wisdom.

"You should reflect," she remarked, "whither your wild theories lead."

"I will gladly so reflect, if you will join me in the meditation."

"Shall I tell you whither they lead?" she asked.

"With your leave, I will tell you," said he.

"And then I will point out the folly of it."

"It is very likely," said he.

There was a pause. The birds sang and the river twinkled as it ran. The Princess looked on the river; the Republican raised himself on his elbow, and looked on the Princess.

"I see," he began, "the Throne upset, the King discrowned, Liberty triumphant."

"What nonsense!" said the Princess.

"I see," he went on, "a marriage broken off and a maiden-Princess, I cannot see what the maiden does. Does she weep, madame?"

"You were to tell, not I," said the Princess.

"Ah! and I see the maiden again. And now, by heaven, she does not weep! She comes smiling through the wood; and there is one whom she meets. They do not call one another 'sir' and 'madame.'"

"What do they call one another?" asked the Princess.

"I think it is 'sweetheart' and 'sweet love,'" whispered the Republican. "Why should they not? She is not a Princess now. And then they talk together."

"Do you hear anything of what they say?" asked the Princess, twirling a wild flower in her hands.

"But little, for they speak very low. They need not speak loud."

"Need they not?"

"No, for they are very close to one another; his lips are at her ear."

"Then, indeed, they need not."

"But his lips do not always rest at her ear."

"Whither go they?" she asked, very low.

"To her lips—and hers to his. And then——"

The Republican, interrupting himself, sprang suddenly to his feet.

"What is the matter?" asked the Princess, with a start.

He put out his hand to her; for an instant she looked at him. Then she took his hand and rose.

"And then," continued the Republican, "they begin to walk. They seem to have made a plan; they walk briskly, quickly. She clings to his arm——"

"Well, the path is rough," pleaded the Princess.

"And he supports her. He talks eagerly as he goes, but she says little, yet she looks at him, and bends her head to listen to him——"

"The water rippling over the stones makes such a noise," said the Princess.

"And farther still they go. Yet she does not seem weary, or to notice the distance."

"Oh, no," said the Princess.

"They leave the side of the stream and plunge into the woods; and once they stop and he kisses her——"

"Oh, go on again—quick!" cried the Princess.

"And then they hasten on, because, delightful as the kiss was, there is that ahead which calls them on. On and on they go, far from the stream, far from the city. Yet again they stop——"

"But for a moment only!" urged the Princess.

"Till, at last, the wood ends and they see before them a little ivy-clad church; it is there that they are to be wed. Who hinders them now? She is not a Princess now. Love is all in all now. On they press towards the church——"

"Yes, yes, quick!" cried the Princess.

"They pass through the churchyard gate, up the little path, to the porch of the church; and a priest comes forth and——"

"I do not see the priest," said the Princess.

The Republican started. They came to a sudden stop. His eyes were eager, his face flushed. The Princess was now red, now white, and she panted, and held a hand to her side. The gate of the porch was locked; and none came to open it.

"I do not see the priest, either, now," said the Republican.

"He is not there," whispered the Princess.

"And the way in is barred," said the Republican.

The Princess loosed her hold of the Republican's arm and sank, still breathing quickly, on a flat tombstone hard by. The Republican stood opposite to her, his arms folded. For a while neither spoke.

"I did not know that we had so much as moved," said the Princess at last.

The Republican made no reply.

"Nor did I know," pursued the Princess, "anything else that we did!" And, as she spoke, a reluctant smile curved on her lips. "You spoke so eloquently," she complained; "you carried me away with you."

The Republican took a step towards her.

"My theories!" said he. "It was all theory."

"Yes, it was all theory," acquiesced the Princess.

"Wild theory," said the Republican.

"Very wild," said the Princess, shaking her head.

"Not to be spoken of in public."

"By no means," said the Princess.

Again they were silent for a time. Then the Princess sighed.

"We must get back to Fact," she said. "Is it far?"

"A mile or two," said the Republican, "to where we came from."

"And another to the town?"

"With the shop-windows?"

"Yes," said the Princess, sighing again.

"Shall I come back with you to Fact?" asked the Republican.

"I think," said the Princess, glancing up at him, "that I had rather you stayed here—in Theory."

"And you will go back alone—to Fact?"

"Yes; but now and then I may think of you—in Theory. How strange the difference is!"

"It is but this," said the Republican, and he knelt on one knee, and with deep respect raised the hand of the Princess to his lips, and rose again, and drew back, bowing thrice.

"That is Fact," said he.

The Princess's lips curved again.

"And Theory?" she asked, looking away from the Republican.

"This," said the Republican, springing forward, "is Theory."

"And whither leads it?" asked the Princess, a moment later; and her tone was sad.

"To a barred door," he answered, sorrowfully.

"Yet," she mused, "it has its own delights. No—no more of it!"

She rose and courtesied to the Republican; he bowed very low.

"Sir," she said, "farewell."

"Madame," said he, "farewell."

She turned away, but, as she went, she looked over her shoulder.

"Madame," said he, "I fancy you think indulgently of my poor Theory."

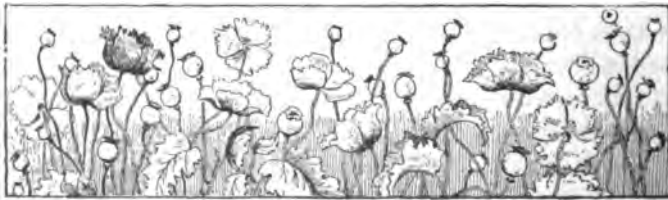
"Sir," said she, "I will judge it by my heart."

"I pray an easy judgment."

"It is such," said the Princess, "as a fellow-sinner gives."

The sun sank—it seemed suddenly. And the Princess went, slowly, alone, back through the wood, back to the town and the shop-windows. And when the King spoke of "pestilent theories" that night in the Palace, once more her lips curved. For they knew about the theories—more than the King knew.

And the poor Republican also is wedded—but to Theory.



THE LEGEND OF SIR DINAR*

BY A. T. QUILLER-COUCH



PUFF of northeast wind shot over the hill, detaching the last December leaf from the sycamore on its summit, and swooped like a wave upon the roofs and chimney-stacks below. The smoke ascending through the chimneys was caught midway and driven back with showers of soot and wood-ash, discomfiting the townsmen who lingered by their hearths to read the morning paper. The blast, its strength thus broken, fell flat upon the macadam of the main street, scattering its fine dust into fan-shaped figures; then died away westward in eddies. Among these eddies the sycamore leaf danced and twirled, now shooting along the ground upon its edge, like a tin disk, now whisked up to the level of the first-story windows. A nurse, holding up a three-year-old child behind the pane, called out, pointing after the leaf :

“ Look—there goes Sir Dinar ! ”

Now the legend of Sir Dinar is as old as the Round Table, though later touches, easily detected, have been added to it. And this is how they tell it :

Sir Dinar was the first son and comeliest of King Geraint, who had left Arthur's Court for his own castle above Portscatho-in-Roseland, and was buried, when his time came, over the Nare, in his golden boat with his silver oars beside him. To fill his seat at the Round Table he sent, in the lad's sixteenth year, this Dinar; who in two years was made knight by King Arthur and in the third was turned an old man before he had achieved a single deed of note: as is to be shown.

For on the fifth day after he was dubbed knight, upon the Feast of Pentecost, there began the great quest of the Sancgrael, which took Sir Lancelot from the Court, Sir Perceval, Sir Bors, Sir Gawaine, Sir Galahad, and the flower of Arthur's

* A selection from “ The Speaker.”

knights. And because, after their going, it was all sad cheer at Camelot, and heavy, empty days, Sir Dinar took two of his best friends aside, both young knights, Sir Galhaltin and Sir Ozanna le Cœur Hardi, and spoke to them of riding from the Court by stealth: "for," he said, "we have many days before us, and no villainy upon our conscience, and besides are eager. Who knows, then, but we may achieve this adventure of the Sancgrael?" So they listened and imparted it to another, Sir Sentrail; and the four rode forth privily, one morning before the dawn, and set their faces northward.

Now the day of their setting-out was that next after Christmas, and is the Feast of Stephen the Martyr. And as they rode through a thick wood, it came into Sir Dinar's mind that upon this day it was right to kill any bird that flew, in remembrance that when Saint Stephen had all but escaped from the soldiers who guarded him, a small bird had sung in their ears and awakened them. By this, the sky was growing white with the morning, but nothing yet clear to the sight: and while they pressed forward under the naked boughs, their horses' hoofs crackling the frozen undergrowth beneath them, Sir Dinar was aware of a bird's wing ruffling ahead, and let fly a bolt without warning his companions why he did this: who had forgotten what morning it was, and drew rein in their astonishment.

But pressing forward in a minute, they came upon a gerfalcon lying, with long lunes hanging about his feet and through his breast the hole that Sir Dinar's bolt had made. While they stooped over this bird the sun got up, and lifting their heads they saw a green glade before them, and in the midst of the glade three pavilions set, each of red sendal, that shone at the first touch of the morning. In the first pavilion slept seven knights, and in the second a score of damsels, but by the door of the third stood a lady, fair and tall, in a robe of samite, who, as they drew near to accost her, inquired of them—

"Which of you four has slain my gerfalcon?"

And when Sir Dinar confessed and began to make his excuse, "Silly knight!" said she, "who couldst not guess that my falcon, too, was abroad to avenge the blessed Stephen. Or dost think that it was a hawk, of all birds, that sang a sweet melody in the ears of his guards?"

With that she laughed, as if pacified, and asked of their affairs; and being told that they rode in search of the Sancgrael, she laughed again, saying—

"Silly knights all, that seek it before you be bearded! For three of you must faint and die on the quest, and you, sir," turning to Sir Dinar, "must many times long to die, yet never reach nearer by a foot."

"Let it be as God will," answered Sir Dinar. "But hast thou any tidings, to guide us?"

"I have heard," said she, "that it was seen latest in the land of Gore, beyond Trent water." And with her white finger she pointed down a narrow glade that led to the northwest. So they thanked her and pricked on, none guessing that she herself was King Urience' wife, of Gore, and none other than Queen Morgan le Fay, the famous enchantress, who for loss of her gersfalcon was lightly sending Sir Dinar to his ruin.

So all that day they rode, two and two, in the strait alley that she had pointed out; and by her enchantments she made the winter trees to move with them, serried close on either hand, so that, though the four knights wist nothing of it, they advanced not a furlong for all their haste. But towards nightfall there appeared close ahead a blaze of windows lit and then a tall castle with dim towers soaring up and shaking to the din of minstrelsy. And finding a great company about the doors, they lit down from their horses and stepped into the great hall, Sir Dinar leading them. For a while their eyes were dazed, seeing that sconces flared in every window and the place was full of knights and damsels brightly clad, and the floor shone. But while they were yet blinking, a band of maidens came and unbuckled their arms and cast a shining cloak upon each; which was hardly done when a lady came towards them out of the throng, and though she was truly the Queen Morgan le Fay, they knew her not at all, for by her necromancy she had altered her countenance.

"Come, dance," said she, "for in an instant the musicians will begin."

Now the other three knights tarried awhile, being weary, but Sir Dinar stepped forward and caught the hand of a damsel, and she, as she gave it, laughed in his eyes. She was dressed all in scarlet, with scarlet shoes, and the hair lay on her shoulders like burnished gold. As Sir Dinar set his arm around her, with a crash the merry band began; and, floating out with him into the dance, her red shoes twinkling and her tossed hair shaking spices under his nostrils, she leant back a little in his arms and laughed again.

It happened that Sir Galhaltin, leaning by the doorway, heard the laugh and saw her feet twinkle like blood-red moths, and he called to Sir Dinar. But Sir Dinar heard nothing, nor did any of the dancers turn their heads, though he called again more loudly. Then Sir Sentrail and Sir Ozanna also began to call, fearing, they knew not what, for their comrade. But the guests still drifted by as they were ghosts, and Sir Dinar, with the red blood showing beneath the down on his cheeks, smiled and whirled with the woman upon his arm.

By and by his breath came shortly and he would have rested; but she denied him.

"For a moment," he said, "because I have ridden far to-day."

But she hung the more heavily upon his arm, and still the music went on. And now, gazing upon her, he was frightened; for it seemed she was growing older under his eyes, with deep lines sinking into her face, and the flesh of her neck and bosom shriveling up, so that the skin hung loose and gathered in wrinkles. And now he heard the voices of his companions calling about the door, and would have cast off the sorceress and run to them. But when he tried, his arm was welded around her waist, nor could he stay his feet.

The three knights now, seeing the sweat upon his face and the looks he cast towards them, would have broken in and freed him; but they, too, were by enchantment held there in the doorway. So, with their eyes starting, they must needs stay there and watch it all; and while they stood the boards became as molten brass under Sir Dinar's feet, and the hag slowly withered in his embrace: and still the music played, and the other dancers cast him never a look as he whirled round and round again. But at length, with never a stay in the music, his partner's feet trailed heavily, and, bending forward, she shook her white locks clear of her gaunt eyes, and laughed a third time, bringing her lips close to his. And the poison of death was in her lips as she kissed him upon the mouth. With that kiss there was a crash, the lights went out, and the music died away in a wail: and the three knights by the door were caught away suddenly and stunned by a great wind.

Awaking, they found themselves lying in the glade where they had come upon the three red pavilions. Their horses were cropping at the turf, beside them, and Sir Dinar's horse stood in sight, a little way off. But Sir Dinar himself was deep in the forest,

twirling and spinning among the rotten leaves, and on his arm hung a corrupting corpse. For a whole day they sought him and found him not (for he heard nothing of their shouts), and towards evening mounted and rode forward after the Sancgrael ; on which quest they died, all three, each in his turn.

But Sir Dinar remained, and twirled and skipped till the body he held was a skeleton ; and still he twirled, till it dropped away piece-meal ; and yet again, till it was but a stain of dust on his ragged sleeve. But before this his hair was white and his face wizened with age.

But on a day a knight in white armor came riding through the forest, leaning somewhat heavily on his saddle-bow as he rode : and was aware of an old decrepit man that ran towards him, jigging and capering as if for gladness, yet caught him by the stirrup and looked up with rheumy tears in his eyes.

"In God's name, who art thou ?" asked the knight. He, too, was past his youth ; but his face shone with a marvelous, strange glory.

"I am young Sir Dinar, that was made a knight of the Round Table but five days before Pentecost. And I know thee. Thou art Sir Galahad, who shouldst win the Sancgrael : therefore by Christ's power rid me of this enchantment."

"I have not won it yet," Sir Galahad answered, sighing. "Yet, poor comrade, I may do something for thee, though I cannot stay thy dancing."

So he stretched out his hand and touched Sir Dinar : and by his touch Sir Dinar became a withered leaf of the wood. And when mothers see him dancing before the wind they tell this story of him to their children.





BY MAURUS JÓKAI

Famous Story Series

THE cannon were silent, the noise of battle had ceased, heroes had lived and died. In the distance a few gleams of lightning were still seen to furrow the sky, a few heavy rumblings were still heard to mingle with the sighing of the wind. It may have been the vanished heroes, beginning a new inexorable combat to defend the gates of Heaven against those whom, an hour before, they were defending the frontiers of their country.

The cemetery lay on the side of a small hill before the gates of Sepsi; the women of the city were awaiting there, not the return of their husbands, their brothers, their sons, or their lovers, but the news of the victory. Some were seated on the tombstones, some on the grassy hillocks, and as they heard the thundering of the cannon, they recognized the different pieces: "That is our cannon," said one; "That is Gabor's," said another; sometimes it was the enemy's, sometimes the thunder from the clouds.

All the women of Sepsi—mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, betrothed—were saying, with sighs: "If he whom I await come, let him come as a victor; but if, in this last combat, he has allowed the honor of his country to perish, let the messenger never come to tell us of it."

An old man was sitting at the door, under the porch of the chapel; he seemed to be listening attentively. He was a nonagenarian, and being blind, had for a long time seen only through the eyes of his soul. He had been led there at his own request; he could not remain in his dwelling, for his uneasiness as to the issue of the battle would not permit him. He wished to know,

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and to know without delay. Near him a young cripple was seated, the half of whose body was paralyzed; but his heart was sound, for it was filled with thoughts of battle, as he said bitterly: "Would I were yonder to take part in this bloody conflict!"

On his knees was a Bible, and by the waning twilight David, the name of the cripple, was reading to the old man. They were the last two men of the city,—an old man and a paralytic,—all the others, young or old, had gone to fight for their country. He was reading about the wars of Israel, and had just reached the great battle where the people of God had lost the holy ark, and where thirty thousand combatants had lost their lives. "Why was I not able to be one of their number?" sighed David, and continued his reading:

"And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain. And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head. And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon his seat by the wayside watching; for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told it, all the city cried out. And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said: 'What meaneth the noise of this tumult?' And the man hasted, and came and told Eli. Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were set, that he could not see."

The cripple could not continue; he looked at the old man through the tears in his eyes.

"Why dost thou not continue?" asked the grandsire.

"It is so dark I cannot distinguish the characters."

"Thou dost not speak the truth; the sun is still shining; I feel its warmth upon my face. Why dost thou not read?"

The cripple dried his eyes and continued:

"And the man said unto Eli, 'I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to-day out of the army.' And he said, 'How went the matter, my son?' And he that brought the tidings answered and said, 'Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken!'"

The reader could control himself no longer; sobs choked him and he leaned his head on the old man's knees. The old man urged him no more, but, as if he were going on with the reading,

he added in a low tone, with his eyes closed, the verses he **knew** so well :

"And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off his seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died; for he was an old man and heavy."

Near the trench of the cemetery, leaning against an acacia, stood a young woman. She could not have been more than thirty-five years old, although her features were hard and stern. Toward the west the sky was lighted by the rays of the setting sun; toward the east the sky was furrowed by flashes of lightning. The Sicilian woman stood so that the golden red of the setting sun lighted her face on the one side, and the scintillating gleams of the pale lightning on the other. She raised her hands above her eyes so that she could see the better into the distance, and her body remained as immovable as if chiseled in cold stone. It was Judith, the model woman of Sepsî. The women of Sepsî were not of a perfect beauty, but all were remarkable for the characteristic expression of their faces. Their eyes were large and black, with a penetrating gaze; their hair was long and thick and as black as night; their voices were melodious, and their irreproachable forms retained into advanced age the suppleness of their youth; their souls never grew old, but accumulated with years an increase of strength and energy.

By the side of Judith stood a beautiful young girl of sixteen years; although she leaned against Judith as a frail plant against a tree, her attitude was full of pride. Her name was Aranka. She was fair, with blue eyes and blonde hair; her body was so frail that a breath of wind might carry it away as easily as it might the petals of the poppy. She was betrothed to the son of Judith, who had gone out to battle for his country. The mother and the betrothed girl were endeavoring to catch a glimpse of the young warrior through the increasing mist of the deserted plain.

"Dost thou not see some one drawing near?" asked Judith of the young girl, indicating with her hand a certain point in the distance.

Aranka leaned more heavily against her, to endeavor to see in the direction indicated; her head rested firmly on Judith's shoulder. She could see nothing yet; her turquoise eyes could not penetrate through the mist to so great a distance as the piercing gaze of Judith. A few moments later the form grew

more distinct. An expression of joy lighted up the countenance of the young girl, while anger inflamed that of the mother.

"It is he, my betrothed," falteringly spoke Aranka, pressing her little hands over her heart, as if to prevent its beating too rapidly.

"He is unarmed!" cried Judith, with indignation; she turned her face away and covered it with her hands.

At that moment, when the young girl had recognized her lover, the mother had recognized the shame of her son.

Trembling, almost reeling, the man seen in the distance was crossing the pathless plain. His head was bowed; his step was slow and painful; his knees bent and he fell. He rose to his feet, and with painful efforts made his way toward the city. When he saw the women gathered on the hill in the cemetery, he turned his steps in that direction. He was covered with dust and blood, his hair fell in disorder over his face. His clothes were in rags. He endeavored to conceal a large wound in his breast. All the women who surrounded Judith had recognized her son. The mother was separated from him only by the trench of the cemetery; he had not strength enough to jump over it, and he sank down.

"Where are thy weapons?" asked the indignant mother, as she stepped out from the group of women.

The young man tried to reply; the words died on his lips. He tried to say that he left his arms in the heart of his enemy.

"Speak, is the battle lost?"

Her son made a mute sign and dropped his head.

"Hadst thou remained there, thou wouldst not be obliged to endure the days of shame that await us. Why didst thou return?"

The young man was silent.

"Why dost thou wish to survive thy country? Art thou come to its burial? Seek a tomb on the battlefield, there where is glory in death. Go from here! There is no place for thee in this cemetery. Thou shalt not share our death. Leave us! Forget this was thy birthplace. Living or dying, forget us!"

The young warrior threw a supplicating look toward the women; he saw on their faces not the least trace of emotion or pity. With his eyes he sought his betrothed, the most beautiful hope of his soul. She was on her knees at the feet of his mother, her head concealed in the skirts of Judith, stifling her sobs.

The young man waited, trembling, hoping some one might make him a sign to stay. But when he saw no one spoke to him, that neither his betrothed nor any one of the other women seemed to give him the slightest attention, he moved away, broken-hearted and desperate. He walked with an unsteady step across the deserted plain, until he reached the forest; there he sought shelter under a clump of trees. Then, taking his hands from the deep wound, the blood ran, drawing with it the life of the young warrior; and thus he died deprived of the last sympathizing word.

A few of the sons of Sepsi returned toward the city, but the women drove them away.

"Seek another country," they cried to them, "since you have not known how to defend yours. Curses upon you; fly from here! Go out into the world, so far that you will never be seen again."

The Sicilians uttered loud cries, their lamentations mounted on high. The old man seated under the porch of the church asked the meaning of this uproar.

"Transylvania is lost! Thy sons, thy grandsons, are dead. Gabor has succumbed; all the cannon are taken. The general has fallen in the battle."

Hearing these words, the old man clasped his hands, raised his sightless eyes toward Heaven and cried:

"My Lord! My God!"

Then his eyes opened to the eternal rays of Heaven. He was dead!

The women took the body of the old man, who had not been able to survive the news of the defeat, and carried it into the abandoned city.

David walked among them, plunged in the bitterest reflections, repeating to himself:

"Why is it not I who am there? Why is it that I have not been able to die with the others?"

Not a sound man remained in Sepsi. The brave had fallen, the coward had fled, the last lay in his coffin.

Among the women who surrounded the coffin of the grandsire, there were few others than widows and orphans. God, who looked down upon their weeping, knew the inward motive of the falling tears. The cripple, seated on a bench, was obliged to listen to the oft-repeated lamentations: "The last man is dead."

He was not looked upon as such. The descendants of the old man were numerous, the number of his grandsons and great-grandsons would have been difficult to name; he had enjoyed the respect and esteem of all; those whom he had benefited during his long existence, those whom he had helped in misfortune, those whom he had encouraged by wise counsels, those to whom he had been a support—all were absent at his last moment to do him reverence; David alone remained. The assembled women mourned for him as for their own kindred; all revered him and regretted his departure; no one more than Judith, the strong-souled woman; yet her eyes were dry for the lack of weeping. David, as well, did not shed a tear. Toward the Heavens their looks were riveted and their eyes shone with suppressed fire. Judith signed to the cripple to follow her into a neighboring room; when there, she said to him:

"David, thy ancestor rests in his coffin; thou lookest upon him, but dost not shed a tear; of what art thou thinking? I hear thee sigh and groan, why?"

The helpless man dropped his head and was silent.

"David, if thou wert a strong man, and instead of crutches, thou couldst have a sabre—David, wouldst thou thus lower thy head?"

The unfortunate man raised his gleaming eyes to the woman; his transfigured face breathed forth energy and courage; his burning soul seemed to be bursting its puny covering.

"Thou wilt never be happy," continued the widow, "not a single joy awaits thee in this life. Who knows how much longer thou mayst be obliged to live? But speak, if death should appear before thee in its most glorious aspect, grander even than the field of battle, and should say to thee: 'Throw away thy crutches, take up rather the weapons of warfare, of destruction; I will give thee that which thou cravest most in this world; make of thy crutches either thy coffin or torches, so that at the moment of thy death nothing shall remain, nothing that shall remind thee in the other world of this.'"

"I do not understand thee," said David.

"Perhaps thou dost not wish—perhaps life is too attractive—with its hardships and its cruelties, life in a miserable body may still be desirable—crutches may not wish to be exchanged for wings."

"Oh, do not say that! How many times would I have

given my miserable life for envied death!" said the cripple, and he added in a low voice: "For a glorious death!"

"And who could die a more glorious death than thou? A battlefield where thou shalt fight with the elements; thou shalt soar above the battle cries as the angel of massacre above the dead; thou shalt warn the living, by a metallic voice, to a desperate resistance; and when all shall have been overcome, when all help shall have been useless, thou shalt snatch from the enemy's hands the victory that shall be thine; thou shalt die as a hero, not in a tomb, but in Heaven."

"O, if I could!" sighed the unfortunate man. "What is my voice? No one could hear it in the din of battle. To what use could my arms be put? My hands could not win a single victory."

"Listen to what I tell thee. The conquerors will be here to-day or to-morrow, in our city, but they shall find no rest; they shall have neither joy nor peace. The houses will be closed against them; we will reply to their attack by resistance, and if the sons of Sepsì have known how to die defending their city, so shall the women not be unworthy of them. We shall be conquered, for the arm of woman is weak, if her heart is strong. We have no arms, we have no means of defense, we have only our spirit with which to oppose them. The end will not be victory, but a glorious death. Thou shalt climb into the tower and shalt keep an eye toward the approaching enemy; when thou seest him, thou shalt sound the alarm. We will wait for the invaders around the coffin, and if they enter by force, woe to us, woe to them! We will defend every house. Despair will teach us how to fight, and if fright weakens our arm, courage will be renewed when the metallic voice pronounces the word; it will give new strength to our hearts. Thou shalt ring the bell as long as there is hope. When the battle is lost, thou shalt take the torches of rosin that thou wilt find at hand; thou shalt light them, and when the enemy shall have invaded the city, thou shalt throw them burning on the roofs of the houses; when the city shall have become a sea of flames, thou shalt ascend to heaven in a cloud of incense."

In an ecstasy of soul, the cripple listened to the terrible words of the brave woman. As her last words were pronounced, he threw away his crutches and, at the feet of Judith, clasped his arms about her knees, uttering incoherent words, but in the fire that illumined his eyes could be divined the readiness of

his soul to take flight before the vivid picture of death her words had painted.

"Shalt thou have the courage?"

"O, I shall be happy, too happy! I shall be paralyzed no longer, I shall be lame no longer, I shall be a hero! I will put fire to the tower above my head, and I will continue to ring the bell in the midst of the flames, and as long as my spirit stays with me I will sing: 'Lord, the dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heavens.'"

David had remained kneeling, his clasped hands raised toward heaven; he was in an attitude of most fervent prayer, and his body shook with deep emotion.

"Come with me," said Judith, helping him to rise.

David picked up his crutches and walked so quickly that he seemed to be borne along on wings. He went once more into the room where lay his ancestor, placed a kiss upon his cold hands, and, with an expression not of this world, he murmured: "We shall soon see each other."

Judith requested the women to remain there till her return; she then led David to the tower, where he climbed the stairs with almost superhuman strength. Judith kissed him on his forehead and left him alone. He sat where he could command the best view into the distance. When he saw Judith, he called to her; then bending over as she looked up, he threw away his crutches.

"I have no need of them, and I wish to make sure of acting bravely at the hour of trial. I have locked the door; here is the key." He threw the key to Judith, then turned his gaze into the distance.

Judith returned to the house of death. The women were all there; she called them out into the court and stood in the midst of them. She overlooked them all in stature; her piercing eyes seemed to read to the very depths of their souls, her impassible face gave evidence of strength and spirit. As her sons were dead, she was looked upon as the one to take command. They were not crying now; they were listening. With a calm voice, that scarcely vibrated with the emotion that filled her soul, she said:

"Sisters, widows and orphans of Sepsi, listen to my words! God has sent us a cruel trial. We have been compelled to outlive our happiness, to survive those we loved. There is not a house in our city that does not await an absent one who will

never return. Whether we die to-morrow or whether we await old age sadly in our deserted dwellings, all the joy of this world has passed from us, the better part of our lives lies under the ground. But that is not the only trial that would weigh most heavily upon our heads. In the place of those whom we have loved, others are coming, their murderers. We shall see them march through our city to the sound of triumphant music; we shall see them seated in our dwellings in the places of those whom we mourn. In place of their kindly words, we shall hear a foreign tongue; we shall see strange faces, and widows will be insulted by the lustful glances of these intruders. But I shall not await cowardly the coming of all these things. Death restores all that life has taken, and death no one can take from us. If I did not know that I am in the midst of Sicilian women, I would take leave of you all and go away alone. I would act alone; I would die alone. But I know you all. You will all be there where I shall go, and your death will be worthy of the death of those who have preceded us. Return to your dwellings, barricade every opening, leave but one door open, make hot fires where the children can boil the water and oil. At the first stroke of the bell meet me here. We will carry the coffin of our venerable ancestor to the gates of the city; we will dig a ditch, and with this coffin we will close the entrance to Sepsî. No one will dare pass this barrier. Now, to your homes, and return at the call of the bell."

The women separated; not a tear was shed; overwhelmed with a mute despair they returned to their homes. They did as they were commanded; they barricaded the openings, put the water and the oil on the fire; they whetted their knives and sharpened their hatchets. The children ran back and forth uneasy and nervous, crying and screaming, for what they knew not.

A cloud of dust arose in the distance; it drew nearer: it was the enemy moving in a straight line upon Sepsî. The bell began to toll—the passing knell of the entire city. It was the only bell in Sepsî; the others had been melted and made into cannon. Two forces approached the gates of the city: the one from without, the other from within. The first was composed of armed, stern-featured men; the last, of women and young girls, weak and defenseless. The first brought heavy cannon; the carriages, drawn by six horses, resembled triumphal chariots of death. The last brought also a carriage, carrying a coffin

heavily draped in mourning, and drawn by six black horses. The first force marched to the sound of martial music, the second to the sound of funeral hymns. The one carried flags floating in the wind; the other, lighted torches. The two forces drew near the gates; an open grave barred the way.

The Tcherkessians were mounted; their dress, their features, their attitude, seemed to recall distant memories of a time long past. When the persecuted Huns had been obliged to leave their natal land, they had wandered over the unknown world in search of a new home; a part had gone to the far West, the other part had remained on the right bank of the Volga, near the wild mountains of the Caucasus. The separated brothers had never met; they had fought against neighboring countries; both had increased. A thousand years later a caprice of fortune had brought them face to face. They met as enemies, and yet a painful presentiment oppressed them, an irresistible attraction filled their hearts with pity; their arms wavered, they knew not why.

The chief of the troops was a prince of the Caucasus; his face, of a fine oval, was bronzed by the sun; a thin, dark-brown mustache covered his upper lip. Had he worn the dolman, his identity as a Hungarian would have been complete. But the clothes that he wore, strange as they seemed, recalled dream-pictures or fancies of childish imagination.

At the sight of these men one could not refrain from saying: What has become of the descendants of our ancestors? are they happy? do they still worship their old God? are they free on their desolate plains and among their wild mountains? We are not happy in our new country; the God whom we have chosen has deserted us, our tears have been many, our struggles have been hard.

Could you understand our words you would say to those whom you have left behind: The fate of your brothers has nothing to be desired; they would sigh sighs of compassion; they would teach our name to their descendants. The day at an end, in the twilight, seated before their cottages, they would tell them that they too had fought as heroically and as vainly as their distant brothers, upon whose heads misfortune had come.

The mounted troop stopped before the grave. The women sang a funeral canticle, glorifying death and the consolations of the tomb, the fleeting happiness of earthly life, and the eternal joys of the world beyond. The voices of the women betrayed

bitter sorrow, they vibrated as the sound of the midnight bell, and the accents of the tolling knell gave a sinister grandeur to the scene. The chief of the troop dismounted, his companions following him. They took off their shakos, clasped their hands and formed a line on one side of the grave; their eyes toward Heaven, they began to pray. How unlike enemies they were. The prayer at an end, the chief made as if he wished to approach the women on the other side of the grave. One of them stepped out from the group; it was Judith. Calm, brave, with a steady eye and an imperative motion of her hand, she said to the Tcherkessian chief:

"No farther! This tomb is the barrier between us and you. There is nothing for you here, our city is deserted; there remain only women and children, whose husbands, sons and brothers you have killed. Here lies the last Sicilian of Sepsi. For more than ninety years he has lived here. A holy man, God left him among us to be our leader, to be our counselor; the Lord called him when the city had no more need of him. His death was a miracle, he did not suffer as other mortals suffer. At the news of defeat his soul took its flight. For ten years he has been blind; had the news of the defeat not killed him, he would have found his death on the battlefield. The women of Sepsi have made his grave here before the gates of the city, so that those who might wish to enter would recoil with fear. Slowly the grass will cover the ways leading thither; trees will grow within and around the walls, so that no traveler shall find a trace of our city. We shall die, and do not wish to be mourned. We live in sorrow; we shall die without leaving a memory, as is befitting the widows of husbands and sons who found their death on the battlefield. Blessed be this tomb that separates our city from the world, and cursed be he who would wish to pass over it! Amen!"

To these words of the Sicilian woman, which he had not understood, the Tcherkessian made a sign of compliance and fixed his white handkerchief to the end of his lance. He wished her to understand that it was peace and conciliation that he was offering to the city. She understood, but rejected the offer, adding:

"It is in vain that you offer us peace. As long as there is breath in our bodies, there shall be war between us. We shall find peace only in death. Sorrow has come to us, and as this sorrow that fills our hearts is caused by the death of our loved

ones, we can only look upon you with hatred. Go! the world is large, there is room for all, there is nothing here. You would find neither rest nor glory; peace has abandoned our city forever. The days of our happiness are numbered; there are only women with eyes red from long weeping for their well-beloved. They are unfortunate women whom despair weighs down and whom death alone can deliver. Go!"

The Tcherkessians could not understand these words, but they echoed in their hearts, and they remained bowed before the tomb contemplating this sad scene. Their duty was absolute obedience, but they did not hesitate to transgress it. The strength to step over this grave and enter the city, as they had been commanded, left them.

"Raise your weapons, take away the white handkerchief!" cried Judith to them. "Bury your lances in our hearts, dip the handkerchief in our blood! Unfurl your flags and enter our city!"

"Walk over our bodies, crush out our hearts!" cried the frantic women with one voice, as they threw themselves before the horses of the Tcherkessians.

The animals reared and recoiled. The Tcherkessians thought of their loved ones at home, whose voices resounded in their ears as the voices of these women. They had left mothers, sisters, betrothed ones, as beautiful and charming as these women who had thrown themselves under their horses' feet; their eyes were as bright, their countenances as clear, their features as beautiful and mournful, their forms as graceful, their hair as black. The heart of the commander was moved; he turned away his head to hide the tears that were filling his eyes, and, after one of his soldiers had waved the white handkerchief in token of good-bye, he put spurs to his horse and shot into the plain, followed by the troop waving their lances in the air. They soon disappeared in a cloud of dust, never to be seen again by Sicilian or Tcherkessian women.

The company returned to camp. The chief was brought before a council of war for not having carried out the commission intrusted to him; and he who would not fight against women, was condemned to death by the military laws, for having deserted before the enemy.

They sent men with stouter hearts against the city of Sepsî. The cavalry leaped over the grave dug before the gates, and entered the city. They found all the doors closed and were

obliged to force them open. It was a painful and mournful struggle, a fight without glory, against women and children. Every house was stormed, in every street the struggle was renewed, and from the tops of the houses the exasperated women threw stones, boiling water and oil upon their assailants.

The bell did not cease to ring. Amid the cries and noise of war, it continued to ring with a desperate clang, like the commanding voice of a giant dominating the city; then suddenly, in the midst of the noise, a powerful chant was heard: "O Lord, the dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heavens."

At the end of the day the fight had abated, the city was in the hands of the invaders, and the songs of their triumph filled the air.

Suddenly the air was furrowed by flaming brands that lighted upon the roofs of the houses. In a second Sepsi was on fire. A violent wind arose, sending the sparks from one end of the city to the other. The flames burst out afresh; the heavens reflected the red glow; and when the wind for the moment scattered the smoke, an immense furnace was revealed, where demons seemed to be fighting an infernal battle.

Human cries dominated the sinister noises of the fire. The summit of the tower still raised its incandescent head above the highest flames, like an immense torch. The bell was tolling, tolling the funeral knell.

The wind turned; the flames changed; a frightful noise was heard. The bell was silent; the belfry crashed. The wind and the flame were masters of the battlefield. The soldiers fled. Not a sound was heard but the hissing of the flames and the whistling of the wind.



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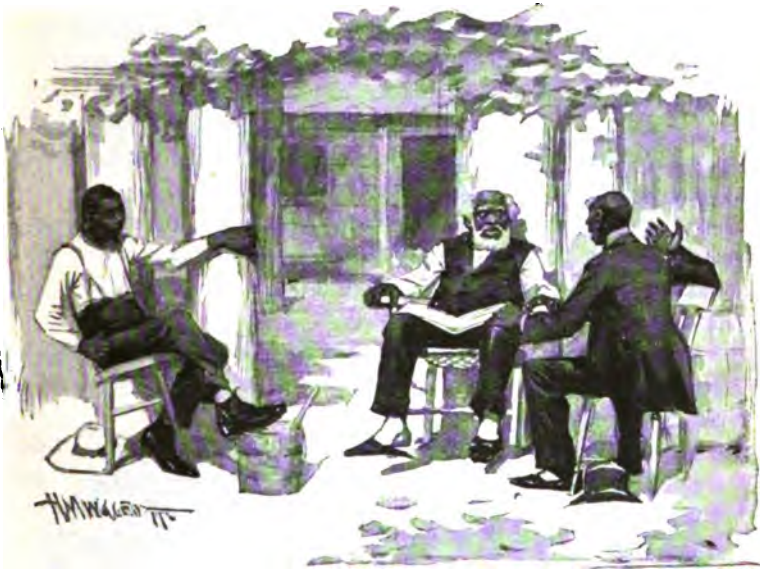
young house-maid
Was sore afraid
That her mistress would let her go.
Tho' hard she worked,
And never shirked,
At cleaning she was s-l-o-w.

Now, all is bright,
Her heart is light,
For she's found... **Sapolio.**

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UNCLE ISRUL'S CALL *

BY CAROLINE H. STANLEY

THERE was certainly something going on out under the "locuses"—of that Aunt Cla'sy was convinced—and putting her ear as close to the open window as was compatible with keeping her body out of sight, she gave diligent heed to finding out what that something was.

Vain attempt! She could hear fragments about "rheumatiz" and "chu'ch jues" and "Greek" or "creek"—she couldn't tell which—but as to making anything out of these disconnected words, it was impossible. She parted the hop-vine in front of the window and peeped out. There the three men sat under the locusts, whose trunks were spick and span in their summer coats of fresh whitewash. Uncle Isrul, her husband, sat in his

* Awarded the first prize of \$50 in Comp. 22. Illustrations by H. M. Wolcott.—Copyrighted.

split-bottomed chair tilted back against the tree, an open Bible on his lap.

His visitors, two middle-aged, respectable-looking colored men, were in earnest conversation with him. The younger, Bro' Ballard, balanced himself on the back legs of his chair, his hand resting on the white trunk of a locust which looked all the whiter by contrast. He had little to say, but nodded frequently in assent to what Bro' Jimmerson said. Neither their thoughts nor their eyes were on the cabin, and Aunt Cla'sy advanced boldly in front of the window and sat down behind the hop-vine where she could see if not hear.

"I ain't gwineter be onderhanded 'bout it," she said, virtuously, and it seemed for a moment as if virtue was to be rewarded, for just then Bro' Jimmerson raised his voice, and said, impressively,

"Hit's de sentimunts of de chu'ch, Uncle Isrul. I ain't a-talkin' fur myself. I'se jest a po' ornery implement in de Lord's hands to spressify de sentimunts of de chu'ch."

Aunt Cla'sy fairly started from her chair. What could this mean? What, indeed, but that the long-looked-for "raise" in Uncle Isrul's salary had come at last. She put the scattered fragments she had heard together, and with a woman's intuition, of which we hear so much, saw at once what it was.

"'Rheumatiz'—'chu'ch jues'—aha! dey done hyeared dat his rheumatiz is wuss an' dey gwine double up on de chu'ch jues an' pay him somethin' reg'lar an' cornstant—*an' hits de sentimunts of de chu'ch*. Well, bless de Lord fur dem sentimunts!" and Aunt Cla'sy, who was raised a Methodist and had been a champion shouter in her day, almost relapsed into her former custom.

"I'se jes one of de Lord's schtowards," said Bro' Jimmerson.

"An' a faithful schtoward you is!" piously ejaculated Aunt Cla'sy, behind the hop-vine.

At this juncture there came from the shed kitchen an odor familiar to all cooks.

"Oh, my Lord!" lamented Aunt Cla'sy, hastening thither, "dem pertaters done bilt out whilst I sot hyeah listenin' to Bro' Jimmerson," and satisfied that she had fathomed the object of their visit, she applied her mind—as much of it as was not occupied in planning immediate improvements, now made possible—to the furtherance of the dinner.

To understand fully Aunt Cla'sy's feelings in regard to the

coming "raise," it will be necessary to have a word of explanation.

Uncle Isrul was pastor of the colored Baptist church of Fulton—a little town in central Missouri—and had been since the war, now ten years past. In the days of slavery he had sat in the gallery of the Presbyterian church with the other negroes, and listened to the Rev. Mr. Coulter, of blessed memory. He had been a member of this church—his name was on the church roll, and his place was never vacant.

Being naturally of a religious nature, he drank into his untutored soul the words of Holy Writ as they fell from the lips of the preacher, and longed with an intensity of longing which perhaps no lettered man could understand, to be able to read it all for himself.

"Ef so be I could jes' read enough to pick a few uv dem texes out—jes' dem wha' holp me so much," he would say to



himself, turning impotently the leaves of his Bible. But alas! they all looked alike to him.

The little daughter of his master used to go to the cabin to read to him in those old slavery days, lured thither by promises

of goober-peas, or hickory-nuts, or, best of all in the winter evenings, frozen apples thawed out in a stew-pan of water set on the coals on Aunt Cla'sy's hearth. It was a picture for an artist that the trio made—the fair-haired child, with head bent low over the open volume, her brow knitted now and then over a hard word; Uncle Isrul, listening as they listen who have lost one sense, leaning over occasionally to snuff the tallow candle with his fingers; and Aunt Cla'sy, more bent upon the apples which were to form the after-enjoyment than upon the reading which filled the present.

The child undertook once to teach him to read, and even insisted against his judgment upon one copy of "pot-hooks," but it was uphill work.

"I reckon you'll haster give it up, honey," he said, one day, after a lesson that had been a severe tax upon both, "Cla'sy, she 'lowed I was too ole, an' I reckon I is."

"Well, Uncle Isrul," said the child, "I don't truly believe I can teach you, but I'll tell you what I'll do. You just tell me your favorite texes, and I'll mark 'm some way so you'll know 'm, and then you can look at the words and say 'm, and play like you was readin' 'm."

The plan was actually pursued, and so it came about that many passages in the New Testament and the Psalms were marked with cabalistic signs in black, blue, and red ink—crosses, circles, stars, and what not, whose meaning was known only to Uncle Isrul and his little teacher. And it was a comfort to the simple-minded old man, almost beyond belief, to be able to turn to a chapter having three red crosses and repeat:

"In my Father's house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you," and know that the words said just that.

Uncle Isrul had been known in those old days as one "gifted in pra'r," and in the prayer-meetings held from kitchen to kitchen through the winter nights, and continued sometimes until they were unceremoniously terminated by the lord of the mansion without the use of the benediction, he was a natural leader and exhorter.

After the war the old order of things passed away. The negroes wanted to worship alone, to sit together in the body of a church—however poor—instead of mounting to the gallery or sitting in the back seats of the "white" church. There was a sense of freedom in having things all their own way, and running no risk of premature dismissal.

When the colored church of Fulton went off to itself, the members in council assembled, Uncle Isrul with them, unanimously decided to be known as the First Baptist Church, regardless of the former ecclesiastical connection of its members. They were led to this decision partly by the fact that a small majority of their number were already members of that communion, and partly, it is not to be doubted, by the enticement of so extensive a "baptizin'" as must ensue. Uncle Isrul seemed to be their natural spiritual leader, and, unlettered as he was, they might have fallen upon much worse times than when they acknowledged him as such. So without much ceremony of laying on of hands he was duly installed in the ministerial office.

It is not to be understood that Uncle Isrul's pastoral duties interfered in the slightest degree with his daily labors, or that his pastoral salary obviated at all the necessity for such labors. He chopped wood, made gardens, and jobbed it generally, while Aunt Cla'sy proved herself the helpmeet she was by doing as many family washings as any lay sister in her husband's parish.

But when the "chu'ch jues" were collected and all expenses paid, the residue—sometimes so small that it hardly merited so dignified a name—was turned over to Uncle Isrul, who took it thankfully as just so much extra. Of course, at hog-killing time, he had donations of backbones, and spare-ribs, and sausage-meat from his parishioners, but as he was expected, in his turn, to entertain the visiting clergy—a large and omnivorous body in that section of the country—the outgo more than counterbalanced the income from this source.

So it is not to be wondered at that Aunt Cla'sy should long have prayed in secret for something "reg'lar and cornstant," and that her soul should have shouted within her at the prospect of the fruition of her hopes.

When she returned from the shed-room to take another observation, the men were gone. Uncle Isrul sat as before, except that now his eyes were cast down in meditation. Aunt Cla'sy restrained her curiosity and hastened to her work of getting dinner on the table, pausing only one moment to step off the room and see if it would take four widths or five for the new rag carpet in her mind's eye.

"I gwineter have a hit an' miss, with a red an' yaller stripe thoo it," she said, reflectively.

When they sat down to the table it seemed to Aunt Cla'sy that Uncle Isrul did not look as much elated as the occasion

warranted, but nothing was said till the coffee and the bacon and cabbage were duly exchanged and they were liable to no interruption.

"Wa'n't dat Bro' Jimmerson an' Bro' Ballard out hyarnder in de yard a while ago?" she asked.

"Dat's who it wuz," replied Uncle Isrul, laconically.

"Whut dey come fuh?"

Uncle Isrul did not make an immediate reply. Finally he



picked up the butcher knife and began slicing off meat, aimlessly.

"Eat yo' dinner now, Cla'sy," he said, "I'll tell you arter a while."

Aunt Cla'sy stopped in the act of carrying a saucerful of coffee to her mouth, overcome with astonishment.

"Whut's de matter wi' you, ole man?" she demanded.

"*Stop cuttin' up dat meat!*" Then imperatively, "Now, I wanter know what dem niggers come fuh."

"Well," said Uncle Isrul, desperately, "dey come ter bring de 'nouncement dat my suvices is not required any mo'."

"Whut?" screamed Aunt Cla'sy, "*yo' suvices!*"

"Cla'sy, dey gwine git another preacher."

"Another preacher! Whar dey gwine git 'im? Whut dey want another preacher fuh?"

All pretense of eating was now over. Uncle Isrul leaned on the table to steady himself, for the poor old man was fairly shaking with excitement, but Aunt Cla'sy pushed back her chair belligerently and sat bolt upright.

"Dey say dey might'ly bleegee ter me fur all I has done fur 'm in de pas', Cla'sy, an' Bro' Jimmerson he 'low dey wa'n't never gwineter furgit de pra'rs—an' supplications—at de Throne uv Grace—I has put up fur 'm——" The old man stopped with a pitiful quaver in his voice.

"Humph!" snorted Aunt Cla'sy, "dishyeah piece o' work look lak dey *mighty* thankful!"

Uncle Isrul took no notice of the interruption.

"But dey say fur de future time dey bleegee ter have somebody whut's mo' better educated—somebody whut kin read."

"Whar dey gwine find him?" demanded Aunt Cla'sy, pushing her chair back and flinging defiance to the world in the upward toss of her head. "Dey ain't a nigger roun' hyear kin read, 'cep'n' 'tis de chil'n what's learned since de proclermination. Now, whar you gwine find 'im?"

"Dey done found 'im, Cla'sy. Hit's a young man wha' gwine teach de school nex' winter. Dey gin 'im a call an' he done 'cepted it. He gwineter be hyeah nex' Sunday. Dey say he's one de finest educated men in de country, black or white. Bro' Jimmerson he say he talk Greek jes lak it wuz his mother's tongue. Ef you ax him a question, he's jes ez apt to answer in Greek ez any other way, unbeknownst to hisself—it come so nachel to 'im—dat's whut Bro' Jimmerson say."

"An' whut ef it do?" logically demanded Aunt Cla'sy. "Whut good dat gwine do a passel er niggers? Whut dat thick-headed Bawb Ballard or *Colonel Jimmerson's Alick*—with infinite scorn—"know 'bout Greek?"

Uncle Isrul shook his head.

"Dey say he's a reg'lar grajit."

"Whut's a grajit?" asked Aunt Cla'sy, associating the word

in her mind with "ijit," but aware from the connection that there must be a difference.

Uncle Isrul prudently ignored the question.

"Dey call 'im de Rev. Paphroditus Plummer, an' dey say hit ain't fittin' now we's free to have a preacher called 'Uncle.' Dey say hit's ondignified."

"Den whut make dey doan call you Bro' Craghead, lak I tole 'm to? I alluz say Uncle Isrul wa'n't a 'spectful entitlement fur a minister of de Gawspel, but dey say dey can't break deyse'ves of sayin' it. Dey sholy ain't gwine lay dat up agin you."

"An' den," said Uncle Isrul, not pretending to answer her arguments, "dey say sence my rheumatiz has been so bad dey doan feel no ways safe to trus' deyse'ves to me in the time of babtizin's, de heavy ones mo' specially, feelin' feared I mout be tuk wi' one of my spells whilst I wuz in the water—an' dat *would* be mons'ous bad," he broke off to say.

Aunt Cla'sy was dumb. She had often had this fear herself.

"An' las'ly," pursued Uncle Isrul, conscientiously giving every argument advanced by Bro' Jimmerson, "dey say dat whilst dey ain't got no manner of objection to de texes I preach fum, dey do *cons*ider that de *intruss* of the risin' generation call fur mo' uv'm den what I'se got in my head; dat sence de chil'n has learned to read, dey is bound ter have a preacher whut kin read right off, dout spellin' ary word. An', Cla'sy,"—in a voice in which doubt and grief were mingled, for this presentation, point by point, of the case against himself had almost brought conviction to his own soul,—“I reckon—I reckon dey's right about it.”

"Now, old man," said Aunt Cla'sy, raising one hand impressively, "you stop right dar! Dey ain't right about it. Hit's a sin an' a shame fur 'em to turn you off jes caze dey wanter put on a'rs lak dey wuz white folks—an' yo' spells gittin' wuss all de time—an' dat mis'ry in yo' chis' a-ketchin' uv you ever time you chop wood—an' me jes los' Miss Sallie's washin' an de 'sociation gwineter meet hyeah dis fall—an' all—I say hit's a burnin' shame, an' I ain't never gwine inside dat chu'ch whilst I live—so dar now, you got it!"

This was Aunt Cla'sy's ultimatum. From it she was not to be moved.

The week that followed was a trying one to both of them. It is hard to be laid aside,—to feel that one's best is not enough—

and it does not help it much at first that one is told of it kindly, with sympathetic assurances of respect and consideration. It cannot be softened; the sting of it is its truth.

Uncle Isrul went about his work weighed down with a sense of humiliation—it was such a disgrace!

"I'se jes lak a ole hoss turnt out in de pasture to die," he said to himself, bitterly.

He tried hard, poor old soul, to see the Lord's hand in it, turning over and over in his mind, as he chopped wood, all Bro' Jimmerson's arguments.

"Ef I could jes read," he thought, "I could git some new texes." But then he knew he would never read.

"Seem lak dey might a put up with it a little longer," he said to himself one day straightening up with the sudden "mis'ry in his chis'," which Aunt Cla'sy so much feared, "I ain't gwineter be hyeah long, but while I is, *O Lord!* how I gwine stan' it to see dat man in my pulpit!"

That was it. It was his pulpit. Nobody else had ever had it. He had not dreamed that anybody ever would.

Sometimes when the burden was heaviest Uncle Isrul would hobble out behind the barn or between the corn-rows and drop on his knees in voiceless supplication for help, and He to whom he went did not leave him comfortless. As the days went by his spiritual vision grew clearer. He saw the needs of his people and his own powerlessness to help them as he had never seen them before, and the bitterness faded out of his heart, leaving only the soreness.

"I reckon dey's right," he said mournfully to himself over and over, "I reckon dey's right. Hit's a great gif' to know how to read!"

There was but little said between himself and Aunt Cla'sy about the matter, though it was never absent from their thoughts. The old woman had essayed comfort in the shape of abuse of Bro' Ballard and Bro' Jimmerson and the "whole pack of low-



lived niggers" as she characterized them, but seeing that she only distressed him she desisted at last, and went about with a smouldering fire covered up in her breast.

They did not see much of their neighbors during the week. There was naturally a little constraint on both sides, and it must be admitted that when Aunt Nancy Bruden came in one day Aunt Cla'sy did not meet her half way in her efforts at breaking down this constraint. She listened to Aunt Nancy's protestation that "she had always wanted Uncle Isrul *herself* stidder dishyeah new man," with frigid politeness and entire unbelief, and answered with head up that "it didn't make no manner of difference to *them*. She being a Methodist and Isrul a Presbyterian they had always had their doubts about water babtisin' anyway." She even hinted mysteriously at another call that Uncle Isrul had received or was about to receive, and altogether Aunt Nancy was made so uncomfortable that she withdrew, leaving Aunt Cla'sy in full possession of the field.

When Sunday came Uncle Isrul went about his accustomed preparations for the day as he had done for the last fifty years. This week had told on him. He had had more than one of his "spells," and his face looked pinched and ghastly in the little glass before which he was shaving. Outwardly calm, he was laboring under intense excitement. As he put on his venerable stock Aunt Cla'sy looked in from the shed-room.

"*Isrul*," she said, "in de name er Gawd, what *is* you doin'?"

"Gittin' ready fur chu'ch," he replied, his voice shaking a little in spite of himself. He knew the conflict was upon him and he dreaded it.

Aunt Cla'sy came in and sat down with an unwiped dish in her hand, the picture of dismayed indignation.

"Isrul Craghead!" she said, "*is* you gwinter so demean yo'-s'f as ter go ter hyeah dat man preach in yo' pulpit?"

There is a power and dignity in the utterances of quiet people when they do assert themselves that overmasters the wordy man and makes him dumb. Uncle Isrul laid down the venerable doeskin coat that had so long marked for him the change from secular to sacred things, and said with slow emphasis: "Cla'sy, I'se been a follerer of de Lord fur mo'n fifty yeaahs and I'se nigh on to de eend of my pilgumage. Whilst my Master give me strength ter git dar, I'm never gwine ter stay away fum de sanctuary. I certny is gwine to hyeah Bro' Plummer dis mawnin'."

Brother Plummer! Aunt Cla'sy gave a sniff of disdain and walked out of the room. Such want of spirit was beyond her!

A moment later Uncle Isrul was toiling up the dusty street to the church, fortifying himself as he went with all the "texes" at his command.

Aunt Cla'sy looked after him with a sore heart. "Po' ole creetur!" she said, "po' ole creetur! He ain't gwine be hyeah long—dat's a Gawd's truth!"

She broke off abruptly as a chicken, scared by her uplifted apron, went squawking across the yard. It changed the current of her thoughts.

"I gwineter have fried chicken an' aig-bread fur 'is dinner inst he gets back," she thought. "Hit'll spile dat dozen I been savin' fur Miss Sallie—but I gwine do it, anyhow"—recklessly.

When Uncle Isrul sat down to the table which Aunt Cla'sy's prodigality had thus spread with the delicacies of the season, there was on his face such a peaceful look as it had not worn for a week. It seemed as if he was hardly in need of these creature comforts to cheer his heart—almost that he was not aware of their presence.

He was not in a talkative mood, and Aunt Cla'sy, who was inwardly devoured with curiosity, waited impatiently for him to open up the conversation. He seemed pre-occupied and in no haste to do this, and the meal was nearly over before the subject of church was broached. At last Aunt Cla'sy could stand it no longer.

"Well, did you git to chu'ch all right?" with studied carelessness.

"Yaas, oh yaas."

"Who preached?" still more indifferently.

"De new preacher." Then a long silence.

One question had been hovering on Aunt Cla'sy's lips all during dinner. It came out now with ill-concealed excitement.

"Did—did he preach in Greek?"

"No-o," said Uncle Isrul, slowly and with a puzzled expression, "no, dat's jest whut I wuz stud'n' 'bout, Cla'sy. Dad man's talk wuz *jest ex simple*! Any chile could er onderstood 'im."

"Aha!" with inarticulate triumph, "I 'low all time he didn't know so much. Did he ax you up in de pulpit?"

This was in a community where to see a brother minister in

the congregation and not ask him into the pulpit was to show him the greatest disrespect, and Aunt Cla'sy awaited the answer to this question with much concern.

"Oh yaas," said Uncle Isrul, straightening up a little, "yaas. He ax me in de pulpit an' he call on me to lead in pra'r."

"Hm!" breathed Aunt Cla'sy, perceptibly mollified.

"Whenst I got to the chu'ch I wuz so tired, an' it was so powerful hot, dat I sot down in de va back seat."

Aunt Cla'sy understood.

"Well, arter while Bro' Plummer, he seed me an' he riz up an' says, says 'e, 'I see our venerable Brother Craghead is present.

Will he please to come up in de pulpit?"

"An' I boun' you went?"

"Toob-be-sho I went. An' he shuck hands wi' me an' gimme de ha'r cloth cheer whilst he tuck de split-bottom."

"He did!" ejaculated Aunt Cla'sy.

"An' den arter de sermon he say 'Brotherin,' I know you won't be

no ways satisfied to go way 'dout hearin' de voice of Brother Craghead in pra'r, an' Bro' Jimmerson over in de cornder, he say right out loud, 'Dat's so, Lord.'"

"Right out 'fo' de man?" asked Aunt Cla'sy, in pleased remonstrance.

"Yaas, yaas, an' den, Cla'sy, I did wrastle fur'm at de Throne uv Grace—I certny did."

"What de man preach about?" inquired the old woman after a few moments of respectful silence.

"Well, now, dat wuz de beatines' part uv it all. Dat young man got up dar an' tuck my favorite tex', 'In my Father's house are many mansions.'"

"Well! I've hyeahed you preach fum dat Scripture mo'n fifty times! I thought dey want some new texes."

"So dey say. But, anyhow, dishyeah man gin'm dat one to-day, an Cla'sy, I wuz right down glad he did. Seem lak it wuz a ole friend I wuz meetin' in a strange place. An' he make it all so plain! Look lak death wuz jes gwine frum one room to the nex'. An' den de mansions! Cla'sy, as long as I has had dat tex' in my min' I never seed dem mansions befo' lak I seed'm to-day.



He say dey gwine ter be one fuh all of us—a mansion fuh de rich an' a mansion fuh de po'—a mansion fuh dem whut knows a heap, an' Cla'sy, a mansion fuh *dem waha' can't read!* He say over dar we all gwineter have our chances." And Uncle Isrul looked past Aunt Cla'sy into the blue sky, a rapt expression on his face as if from Nebo's height the beatific vision were even now bursting upon his sight.

He went out soon to his favorite seat under the locusts, and Aunt Cla'sy, strangely softened by his words and the respect shown him at the church, took this occasion to visit a sick neighbor whom she had neglected in her soul-rebellion of the last week. She staid longer than she had intended—it was pleasant after all to have neighbors to talk to, and they were unusually friendly to-day.

When she returned and saw Uncle Isrul still sitting under the trees her first thought was of his imprudence.

"Isrul, *aw* Isrul!" she called. "You better come in de house 'fo' de jew falls. You'll be havin' one o' yo' spells fust thing you know."

Uncle Isrul did not stir.

"Blieve in my soul dat nigger's sleep," she muttered, going toward him and laying her hands on his shoulder.

The old man's chin drooped on his breast; his Bible, open at the three red crosses, was on his knee, and his finger rested upon the words, "In my Father's house are many mansions."

Aunt Cla'sy gave one scared look at his peaceful face.

"Isrul! *Isrul!*" she called. "O my Lord! *Isrul!*"

There was no response. Uncle Isrul had had his call.



UNEXPLAINED *

BY F. E. HAMILTON



HE purple shadows of the mountains fell softly about our cabin door.

Within, the dying fire cast fantastic gleams across the uneven hearthstone, whispering low with its flickering tongues to the hound that lay stretched before it, until he whimpered in his sleep; without, we three, Jack Jentry, Juan, our half-breed guide, and I, prone upon our blankets, smoked our evening pipes and gloried in the blessings of air, color, and scenery bestowed by nature's lavish hand in this New Mexican wilderness.

Life ran with even flow among the great peaks and upon the broad opens about us, and each day very joy of existence sent the full-pulsed blood bounding through the veins.

To eat, to ride, to sleep; to breathe the invisible champagne of the plateau, and feast the vision upon the beauty of mountain, cliff and forest; to ride the half-wild bronco that spurned the earth beneath him, and to hunt the elk, the bear, and the mountain lion; to sleep beneath the great dome of a star-studded heaven, that all night long seemed to throb with a pearly light, and a music too celestial for human ears; these were all blessings that made life worth the living.

Away to the west the serrated wall had lost its tone of gray in inky blackness; above, the grand arch was slowly dimming from blue to deeper cobalt, and eastward the mountain-tops that upheld the rim of heaven had gleamed with crimson, then changed to gold, and now were wrapped with royal purple, fringed with darkness about their feet: night was at hand.

The low breath of the south wind, just moving along the wide plain, came to us flower-scented, bearing upon its wings the musical ripple of the Aroya Salado, more than a mile away, on its endless journey to join the current of Los Pecos.

Through the soft twilight fell the weird cry of a belated sand-

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hill crane, and now and again the querulous bark of a wandering coyote rasped the ear.

I knocked the ashes from my pipe and turned to Jack.

"I'm early in, for we must make a start before sun-up to reach the spring in time. Juan, you're sure the lion does not drink until noon?"

The Indian-Mexican opened his thin lips, removed the corn-husk cigarette that dried his savage blood eighteen hours out of every twenty-four, and replied:

"Si, Signor, not before. The puma sleep all day except just one drink, and that he find when the sun full high."

"And if we ambush on the north and east sides of the canyon, one of us will surely have a shot?"

"Si, Signor."

Jack turned lazily on his blanket.

"Why kill the brute, François? He loves life. Strange, how easily we snap the golden cord that no human fingers have yet learned to re-tie. What is life, that all should so cling to it; or death, that all should so fear it?"

"By the shade of Sam Houston, Jack!" cried I, rising, "you should have been a philosopher, a cynic, a stoic, an occultist—anything, in fact, but a hunter. What have you eaten to-day that disagrees with you?"

My friend laughed as he blew a cloud from his lips.

"Did you ever look into that East Indian science to which you refer, François? Occultism? Do you know, I sometimes think there's a deal in it, rightly understood. Why should not man so train and elevate his spiritual nature, that something which separates him from all else earthly, as to be able to annihilate space and material barriers, even as in thought we now do?"

"Jack, you're surely sick. I will not answer you. And yet, although I do not deny the empiric realms yet to be conquered by the soul of man, I must affirm my own agnosticism, and await the proof. Turn in, turn in, my boy; it will be morning before we know it."

Yielding to my entreaties, the hammocks were swung, the hound tethered at the open door as guard, and half an hour later sleep ruled within the silent cabin.

A dozen miles down the Salado a bit of rugged canyon cut its way through the sloping plain, and somewhere within its densely wooded thickets was the lair of a monster puma, or, as the animal is better known to Americans, mountain lion. Half

a score of times within as many weeks we had seen the beast, but never had been able to get within range. Close to the mouth of the canyon, and where it widened to a little park as it debouched into the valley of the Salado, was a beautiful spring, and at this spring Juan assured us, from the sign, the puma was daily wont to drink.

Our plan was to ambush this—its distance from either side being less than two hundred yards—and when the animal came at noon to kill him. In order successfully to do so we must leave our camp early, make sure our positions on opposite sides of the spring, under cover, and then await the coming of our game.

Just as the first long lances of light, brilliant as spear shafts dipped in blood, were piercing the mists of the morning, Jack and I, after a hearty breakfast, were in saddle and began our ride to the canyon. Juan watched us depart with the solemn immobility of countenance common to his class, and in reply to our direction that supper be ready at five, as we should then return with a puma skin, he exhaled tobacco smoke from mouth and nose, waved his hand with native grace, and turned away, muttering *Quien sabe?*

Our way was across a rolling open, carpeted with grasses, splashed here and there with the color of the gorgeous orange poppies, and diversified with clumps of noble pines. The pure air of the morning was like wine, the cries of the mountain jays filled the ears, and the sualit peaks afar contrasted with the shadowed canyons near at hand. The old world seemed young again in the glory of a new day, and with high hopes and spirits we galloped onward.

Two hours sufficed to reach the little park inclosing the spring, and, dismounting, we tethered our horses half a mile from the proposed ambush, down the wind, amid luxuriant feed and within easy reach of water. Then cautiously we approached the field of action.

The fringe of timber and chaparral which covered the walls of the canyon at this point formed almost a circle, broken only where it touched the banks of the Salado, inclosing an irregular space of perhaps fifty acres, near the centre of which was the spring. Jack was to lie in wait on the nearest side, while I was to work down the river and into the opposite cover; each seeking to place himself in the most available position to obtain a shot at anything approaching the water.

Leaving my companion, with all possible care I proceeded to my point of ambush, and without much trouble secured a spot well protected both from the rays of the sun and from view, where, partly resting against a tree and sheltered on either side and in front by scrub cedar, Spanish dagger and sage bush, I could see the spring and its surroundings. Then I composed myself, rifle in hand, for some hours of silent waiting.

Having for a time studied all the little park until each bunch of cactus, sage or soap-root was familiar to me, I found myself becoming somewhat interested in the inquisitiveness of the jays that fluttered all about me, evidently disturbed by such an unusual visitor to their wooded haunts.

One of the birds would fly swiftly and noiselessly as an owl directly towards me until barely out of reach, when, with a sudden dropping of the long, rudder-like tail, he would arrest his motion and alight soft as a snowflake upon the nearest limb. From that point of vantage he would look me over like a horse-jockey at a fair, turning his head, rolling his eyes, flirting both wings and tail, but all without a sound, until, in the same swift and silent manner, he would be joined by a companion. The newcomer would go through much the same tactics, and then would begin a discussion animated to the last degree.

What they said of me, my personal appearance, dress, and manners I was unable to determine; but from the vigorous and harsh cries of evident disapproval, I had no doubt the conclusion was not a flattering one, and that the expressions used were insulting and abusive to the verge of profanity; for often the two became three, and the three a half-dozen before I sent them all scurrying in hurried flight by some quick motion of my hand.

A number of times this was repeated, until I began to fear the disturbance might alarm the puma, when, without apparent cause, a sudden silence fell, then all the birds turned their heads in one direction, as if noting a new object of interest, and an instant later rose in evident trepidation to disappear for good.

Somewhat surprised, I looked carefully and listened intently, but could discover no cause for their flight.

And now there fell upon me a most overpowering desire to sleep, that, aided by the brooding silence, the soft air, the warm sunlight, and my early rising, seemed likely to conquer me, notwithstanding all endeavor. I dared not rise, for it was now between ten and eleven o'clock and the lion might appear at

any moment, but even as I grasped my rifle more firmly and strove to fasten my eyes upon the spring in the open, the picture before me faded, the lethargy of slumber wrapped me about, and despite will, desire and all, I drifted unconsciously out upon the shoreless sea of dreams.

A strange, incongruous medley filled my brain, teeming with figures and faces unknown to me. Afterward, upon waking, I could recall only a dim, confused picture, wherein a puma seemed to struggle with men in the dark, and one clad in foreign robes, with a turban on his head, wielded a long creese indiscriminately. I seemed to be in danger upon the deck of a boat on a moonlit sea, but was protected; while at the same time I felt that I had saved the life of one who was to me a stranger.

It was a most wearying, unsatisfactory, and altogether disagreeable dream, and I awoke with a start to find the sun at the zenith, and all nature bowed in silence before his majesty.

As my wandering wits came slowly back to my surroundings, half dazed I looked anxiously out into the open before me.

A single glance sent an electric thrill through every nerve, and in the twinkling of an eye I was awake from crown to toe. This is what I saw:

Close beside the spring, stretched upon the greensward, lay a man clad in brilliant costume. His face was turned away from me, but the long arm thrown loosely back and the outstretched hand were brown as an Indian's. Not twenty feet distant, his dun-colored body quivering with excitement, the long tail twitching as a cat's when about to leap upon a bird, and his great head and neck outstretched with cruel eagerness toward the sleeper, was the puma, gathering his feet beneath him while he paused for the deadly spring!

With the instinct of a hunter my rifle found my shoulder, and my eye glanced along its burnished barrel. My body became nerve-stiffened, my breath ceased, and even my heart stood still as I covered the head of the great brute with the little ivory foresight, and my finger pressed steadily upon the trigger.

Over all the beautiful landscape lay the glorious light of the sun, brightening tree and rock, grassy plain and stream, while the soft perfume of a thousand brilliant flowers intoxicated the senses; and amidst all, grim death crouched, only waiting.

A puff of white smoke, an out-shooting tongue of flame, a sharp report that echoed and re-echoed from the walls of the little canyon, and as I swung my rifle muzzle to one side I saw

the lion leap wildly into the air in his last agonizing struggle, and fall dead within three paces of his intended prey. At the same instant the sleeping man sprang to his feet, and as I hastened from my hiding-place toward him, he looked once at the body of the lifeless monster, then turned to greet me with salaams and gestures of the utmost adoration.

His dress was the strangest ever seen along the valley of the Pecos. Upon his feet were sandals, worn with travel, his body was wrapped in a loose, white gown, which, covering flowing trousers and a vest of crimson, was girt about the waist with a sash of the same rich color, while his head was encircled with a turban of spotless white, in strong contrast with the bronzed visage beneath it.

As I approached he prostrated himself upon the ground, his face in the dust, and with low cries, crept toward me. When I had reached his side he suddenly seized my foot and, before I could prevent, had placed it upon his bended neck.

With an exclamation of indignant surprise I sprang back, and sought to raise the man from the earth; but despite all my efforts he remained kneeling before me, bowing his face to the grasses, kissing my moccasined feet, speaking continuously with a soft voice in some foreign and to me unknown tongue.

For a moment it seemed as if the dream had reflected itself upon my waking hours, for so sudden had this all taken place that less time had passed than is required in the narrating since I lay concealed within the cover of the chaparral, and now the dead puma upon one side, and the strange figure clad in East Indian robes upon the other, vividly recalled the central pictures in the phantasm of my sleep.

But I shook myself free from such odd fancies, and by actual force raised the stranger to his feet before me. He was a tall, thin man, with smooth, bronzed face, full of intelligence. The deep eyes that looked into mine told the gratitude his lips could not convey, while the sweet smile that curved his handsome mouth, and the graceful gestures of the long, aristocratic hands, all betrayed the gentleman and the cosmopolitan, even though his Oriental face and costume belonged to a land half the world away.

He saw that his words meant nothing to me, and quickly substituted the sign language, picturing with mobile face and supple arm and body the weariness of a long journey, the welcome draught at the spring, the rest, the slumber, the crouching dan-

ger of the lion, my sudden appearance and his happy rescue. All this followed by overwhelming thanks, that, even without words, were so poured upon me that I blushed beneath my tan.

As I stood shaking my head deprecatingly and waving my hands as though to kill a puma were like the slaughter of an antelope, an every-day affair, the stranger suddenly produced from within his girdle a small bag, and to my intense surprise poured from it a handful of gems; rubies, red as sun-touched blood, opals like great stars, and diamonds, flashing with liquid light, all of which he extended to me with such an exquisite grace that I was even tempted to receive them.

Instantly, however, my face flamed again, and almost rudely I refused the prince's ransom he offered me, and with such gestures as I could command, sought to indicate the slight obligation that he was under for my action.

A look of pain crossed his sensitive countenance, but selecting one of the gems that was set in a ring, a sapphire of magnificent color and size, he so pressed my acceptance of it that I was forced to permit him to place it upon my finger. Having done so, again he would have knelt to kiss the ground at my feet had I not prevented him, and at that moment discovering Jack stumbling down the opposite wall of the canyon, I pointed in his direction. The stranger turned to look, while I stepped a few paces toward my friend.

Jack was hurrying forward, and as he came he shouted :

"I heard your shot, but could not see the lion until he sprang into the air. It was magnificent!"

"Yes," I replied, "and a lucky stroke, too, else our Eastern friend here would shortly have ended his travels," and I half turned to bring the Oriental within the range of my vision.

But I saw only the yellow-brown body of my victim, stretched where he fell, staining the vivid green of the grass with his dark blood; only the sparkling water of the spring, reflecting the clear blue of the heavens above; the level plain was void of all else. The man had gone!

I uttered a cry, stepped backward a pace, and looked again. The sunlight lay warm and silent over all, and through the crystal purity of that high altitude I could see in every direction with wonderful clearness, but the little park was desert bare except for Jack and myself; in the turn of an eye, the draught of a breath, the other had disappeared!

A moment I stood as if stunned, a vague horror chilled me,

then as the voice of my companion fell upon my ear I turned to him and cried, "Where did he go?"

"Who, the puma? Why, there he lies before you!" and in amazement Jack pointed to the dead lion almost at my feet.

"No, the other; the East Indian, who was here but a moment ago! You saw him, and now he has disappeared! It's the strangest thing I ever knew—what was he, and where has he gone?"

Jentry gazed at me in open-eyed astonishment. "Are you mad, sun-touched, or what? An East Indian, and I saw him? In Heaven's name what do you mean? I have seen no one but you since we left camp this morning!"

Again a strange terror came over me, my eyes grew dim, my ears rang as with the sound of many bells, and the beating of my heart was oppressive. What phantasmagoria had beguiled me, what apparition had here so fronted me at noonday? Was I, as Jack feared, going mad?

My face must have been ghastly, for my companion laid his hand upon my arm, and with soothing words sought to lead me to the side of the spring.

"François, my friend, let me give you a cup of water, with a dash from my flask; you have sat too long in the sun; and then you must lie down in the shadow over yonder while I take the jacket from the puma. Come."

I followed, unresisting, to the spring, watched Jentry dip the cool water in his cup and add a little whiskey, then accepted it from his hand, still dazed, still unable to think clearly; when, as I raised the draught to my lips, my eyes fell upon the ring on my finger. With a cry I dropped the cup, extending my hand.

"See! I was right! He was here—an East Indian, for he left this as a token!"

Jentry bent above the stone, examining it with all the care of a connoisseur, then raising his face he gazed long and steadily into my eyes. At last he said, simply, "Tell me of this man."

And I told him. Told him of the figure lying beside the spring with the lithe beast creeping, creeping toward it; of the sudden shot and the wakened man bowing at my feet; of the gems and the ring; of the stranger's dress and foreign tongue, and, lastly, of his disappearance.

Through it all Jack stood motionless, devouring me with his eyes. When I had finished he drew a long breath, took off his

hat, rumbled his wavy hair, as he had a trick of doing, and looked on every side; then, lastly, whistled long and low, and said, "Well?"

And, like him, looking over all the little park before us, brought my still questioning eyes back to my friend's face and replied, "Well?"

Without further words we stripped the lion's skin and bound it in a bundle ready to be lashed at my saddle. We drank from the spring and ate the bits of bread and meat we had brought for lunch. We watched and listened and waited silently for an hour or more; but the only remaining trace of our strange visitor was the mark of one sandaled foot close upon the margin of the water, and the gem upon my finger.

Jentry had been smoking for a long time, evidently deeply wrapped in thought, when at last, with a start, he rose and, Indian fashion, began to search for trails about the spring. I followed him, and together, in circle after circle, each greater than the last, we closely examined every rod of the little park. But all to no purpose. There were three trails, each pointing toward the water; Jentry's, mine, and the puma's. None other; and as we ceased our fruitless search the westering sun reminded us of the twelve-mile gallop still to be taken, and, unsatisfied and bewildered, we reluctantly turned away to seek our saddles and the camp.

As we left the open behind us, Jack paused once more to survey its loneliness, his sweeping view scrutinizing every foot from canyon wall to canyon wall; then, turning with baffled look to me, he said:

"Last night you admitted the possibility of occultism, but demanded a sign. I believe you wear it now upon your hand," pointing to the magnificent sapphire that gleamed with dull, blue lustre in the golden sunlight.

Swiftly we rode homeward, silent for miles at a time, while before us day faded, and from the ramparts of the Chicoto range behind, the wonderful glory of night—that ever present similitude of death—grew and spread and at last enveloped us, just as the wavering light from our cabin door brightened the trail and won a neigh of welcome from our wearied horses.

Five years later, at Nice, I was seeking in the Riviera to regain the health lost by a too earnest attention to business in great Paris. Jentry, my old hunter friend, I had not seen

since the morning upon the dock at San Francisco when he bade me good-by on his way to the Orient.

And as his steamer roared with compressed power, and the rattle of late-coming baggage, officers' orders and men's cries, heavy trampling of horses' feet upon the wharf, and eager laugh and chatter of passengers and friends all about us filled the air and ears, Jack held my hand and, gazing earnestly at the sapphire quaintly set in beaten gold upon my finger, said: "When I see you again, François, I shall know more, and I doubt not you will, too, of this ring and its donor."

But the years had passed as years will, and my experience in far-away New Mexico remained as it had been created, an unset cameo, wonderful and unexplainable, even as the gem itself.

I was not living in the city, but some miles away on the hills toward Ville-Franche, near the roadstead, in a little summer cottage belonging to an Englishman. I had chosen this spot because of the magnificent view of the Mediterranean, and the ease with which I could find my friends among the naval officers when in port.

It was April, and the days passed one after the other, as the novitiate nuns in the processional at St. Margaret's Convent upon the hills back of my cottage—each more beautiful than the preceding one. The glory of air and sky and distant mountain reminded me often of far-away America, only here was added the wonderful majesty of the sea.

The afternoon was waning; the soft throb of the almost tideless waters upon the pure sand of the shore soothed and beguiled me, as idly I swung, half asleep, within my hammock, in the fullest enjoyment of perfect rest. Not more than three miles away lay a man-of-war, her symmetrical proportions reflected in the untroubled blue beneath as in a sister ship of Neptune's world. I was to dine on board at seven, and as the golden moments slipped one by one through the fingers of time into the shadows of eternity, my social duty drew near and nearer, until reluctantly rousing myself, I told Giovanni to make the boat ready while I dressed for the evening.

Although a gondolier, my servant was something more, and able to manage the little gig that I had rented for the season with perfect safety. It was only a cockle-shell, but stiff and staunch, well qualified to drift along the Mediterranean's summer shore.

Promptly on time my black-browed Italian appeared, and seating myself at the tiller, we slipped away from the jetty and out toward the warship. The coolness of coming night and its restful silence as well, had fallen upon the scene, and as I half reclined in the stern and gazed at the fleecy, sunset clouds that floated so far above me, and enjoyed the soothing motion of sea and boat, life seemed a boon rather than a burden.

My friends met me at the landing ladder, and leaving Giovanni to the care of certain of his countrymen among the crew, I was soon at table in the cabin, in the full enjoyment of a good dinner and a most charming company of gentlemen.

When the cloth was removed and coffee served, stories became the order of the hour, and as time sped, by some chance the supernatural, that finds so warm a spot in every sailor's heart, became our theme; and after listening to the recital of divers strange experiences from some of the others, I told the tale of my ring.

It was received as the success of the evening, and for more than three hours we discussed the singular occurrence, offering a thousand explanations, none of which explained. In fact, it was almost midnight when, reluctantly parting from my genial hosts, I descended to my boat and cried a last good-night as we shot away.

A gibbous moon hung low in the eastern sky, sick and pale, shedding only a ghostly light across the silent sea. The dim phosphoric gleam of the oars as they rose and fell, the soft sob of the water against the side of the gig, the balmy air, the all-pervading silence, and last, but by no means least, my excellent dinner, all combined to induce somnolence, and as the moments passed I sank into that state of half consciousness which lies in the debatable land of shadows; my thoughts were disconnected, my brain vision-haunted, and at last, overcome, I slumbered.

Slowly the wondrous realm of dreamland revealed itself to me, and I lived another life beyond that of the body. For a time my fancies were Paris-bound, and I took part in scenes, ludicrously distorted, from the months of my city experiences; but after a little other figurés were added to the strange panorama, and the picture became a curious mosaic of town and country, new and old. I found myself upon the rolling western plains again, viewing, not the peaks of the Chicoto, but the Eiffel tower; listening, even while clad in buckskin, not to the

murmur of the Arroya Salado, but the hoarse roar of the Place de la Concord. About me swayed a motley throng; ladies in evening dress and half-breed guides; men in naval uniform and Indian braves; Italians and cow-boys; and suddenly amidst the shifting crowd I discovered a face that I had seen but once, never to forget it, the face of the stranger whose life I had saved.

And even as it became clear to me all else faded, dark shadows pressed upon me and a strange reflection of a reflection, a distorted dream of a former dream, blotted out everything, and again I was struggling for my life in the dark, and one clad in Eastern robes and wearing a turban fought at my side.

The horror that sometimes haunts the midnight seemed to threaten me, and moaning, with a mighty effort I awoke; while even as I did so a cry from Giovanni rang in my ears, and my little boat lurched heavily!

We had collided with another craft, a long, dark-colored, latteen-rigged boat, that passed us, moving swiftly. So swiftly, that even as we recoiled from the impact, and the curses of its crew rang in our ears, it seemed to fade into the mists of the night without another sound.

"How was that, Giovanni?" queried I; "did you not see them?"

"We had right, Senor; row-boat always have right! They should go astern; they tried to run us down. Ah, see! They come again!" And with all the excitable gesticulation of his race he pointed to leeward.

I turned to see the sharp prow of the oncoming craft almost upon me; the next instant our lighter boat was cut in two and Giovanni and I hurled into the water!

Seizing a trailing rope's end, I was hardly aware of my involuntary plunge before I had gained the deck of the lugger, furious at what I supposed to be stupidity, and at the same moment my oarsman appeared also, having seized the bowsprit-stay as we were swept under.

There were four men on the deck, one at the tiller and three forward, but before I could speak I saw one of them spring upon Giovanni, striking at him furiously, while at the same instant two others ran quickly aft and attempted to seize me.

But I did not permit that. I had been taught the use of my hands and feet in Paris, and was able to floor one and to elude the other in his first rush. I knew my danger now—these were

harbor pirates, scoundrels of the lowest type. Our only resource was to fight, for if overpowered it meant robbery, and perhaps death.

Giovanni and his antagonist were still struggling near the foot of the mast, when those who had attacked me again approached, this time armed with ugly billets of wood. I glanced over my shoulder, debating a plunge into the sea; but the shore lights were too distant, and I therefore retreated toward the bow, intending if possible to secure a footing upon the vessel's horn, where only one assailant could confront me at a time.

My action betrayed the plan, for the man at the wheel sprang to his feet, and running swiftly toward the others, cried in Italian, "You fools! He will escape you yet. Quick, make an end!" and, leading the others, with a rush they threw themselves upon me.

I remember the despair that swelled in my heart; I remember the blows and the pain; I remember a sudden determination to fling myself into the sea and so cheat the thieves of their prey; when suddenly a fourth figure appeared, something flashed in the dim light, groans took the place of curses, and almost before I could realize it, two of the pirates had disappeared, two others lay writhing on the deck, while Giovanni and I stood alone and unharmed!

Alone, and saved from sudden death—but with the vivid remembrance of a tall, bronzed figure, clad in white, turban-crowned, and girt about with a crimson sash; and as I turned my foot struck something upon the deck that rattled, which, stooping, I found to be a weapon, with steel hilt and blade leaf-shaped, wet with blood.

Upon my dressing-room wall to-day there hangs a Malay creese, rust-touched and stained, and on my finger I still wear a sapphire, quaintly set in hand-beaten gold; but neither in the world of sunshine, waking, nor in that reflex one of shadows, sleeping, have I ever again seen the form or phantom of my strange visitor from the Orient. Yet often, late at night, before my dying fire, I sit and brood and wonder; seeking to scale the wall that limits human wisdom, striving for the unknowable, until my weary brain revolts and turns away baffled and discouraged, while the mystery remains, still unexplained.

THE FAITHFUL FORTNIGHT*

BY BARRY PAIN



It was a warm summer night; the not absolutely impossible band was playing one of Waldteufel's waltzes. In the silence that followed one could hear the sea's melancholy plash on the piles of the pier, and its crisper sound on the shingle. There was no moonlight; the stars seemed to be an infinite distance away; the sea, too, under the gray sky, seemed to stretch to infinity—one could forget the geographical position of France. It was a splendid night for the emotions. One did not analyze. The band was playing *appassionato* at so much the hour, but one did not think of that nor inquire how much. One could forget the band in the music that sympathized so readily—the music that seemed to plain middle-aged women on the pier to be making to them that love which in real life they had missed. And such suggestions of infinity as the sea and stars afforded, ill-founded though they were, did not go for nothing. Even if they did not give one high emotions, at least they made one believe that such emotions as one had were high. It was a night on which it seemed noble and appropriate to hope, or sorrow, or love.

In that little town—that fashionable seaside resort, as guide-books and excursion time-tables like to call it—it happened that many people were falling in love. Occasion is responsible for so much. And yet the town was not very full, for the London season was not yet over. The pier was not crowded, and offered one dark and retired corner, of which two people were taking advantage—a man and a woman.

He had come from London that day to perform the act of renunciation. He was going to give her up. And he was going to do it in rather a pathetic way. His reasons for the step were many and various. In the first place he had so far, in spite of

* A selection from "The English Illustrated Magazine."

her manifest interest in him, never been able to persuade her to say that she loved him. In the second place, there was the opposition of the uncle, who was her guardian. The uncle's chief objection to the suit of a struggling, artistic exile had been that he detested people who struggled, people who were artistic, and people who were foreigners. True, when the exile had visited at the uncle's house, the uncle had been civil to him; but when the exile had commenced to make love to Vera, the uncle had been offensively and intentionally rude to him, without taking the trouble to give any reasons for his rudeness. He had also packed off Vera to the seaside, in case of accidents, with Lady Melbrough as her chaperone. From the seaside, in a fortnight's time, she would go north, where she would meet her uncle, but not the exile; and though she would return to London in the following season, the uncle had made it quite impossible for the exile to call at the house again. He had not said anything to his niece on the subject, being but little given to the weakness of saying things when it was quite sufficient merely to do them. But still Vera knew, and the artist exile knew. In the third place the exile had realized that it was possible that he might fall in love with another woman—in fact, there had already been a something, merely a something. And so he had decided that he ought to come and see Vera for the last, last time, and give her up, and hope that she might find the happiness which, in the loss of her, would be forever denied to him.

Vera looked meditative; she leaned against the back of the seat impassively, and her foot did not waggle, and her hands did not toy with anything. She presented a contrast to the nervous and excited manner of her companion; but then her profile was beautiful, and he could see it, and she could not. He was giving her up, with the slightest possible foreign accent, in this manner:

"Vera, I love you. I adore you. What other woman could be loved like you! Do not send me back again to London. Why should I not wait here and meet you like this every night just for this last fortnight?"

"To-night," Vera answered, very quietly, "Jane believes that I am with Mrs. Watson Harding, while Mrs. Watson Harding believes I am with Jane. That can not always be managed."

"Let me present myself openly."

"Jane will be asked questions when we go north, and I fancy Jane knows that."

"Ah, do not speak so coldly; do not mock me; I am not

ashamed of my entire devotion to you. What would it matter if every one here saw me constantly with you——”

“But stop,” Vera said. “I reverence conventionality. For that reason it will be quite useless for you to suggest romantic, picturesque, and impossible things. My maid does my hair very well, and I try to live up to that. This is not my first season, and I have seen some women—nice, good women—who attempted the romantically innocently impossible. Stranded, if you please—just that. I am not going to be stranded. I do not want my friends to have to think the best of me. I want my enemies to think the worst of me, and get no satisfaction out of it. When you suggest that I enter upon weeks of public flirtation with a man I do not intend to marry, you suggest what is impossible. No, don’t think me hard. Believe me when I tell you how deeply sorry I am for you. But you should not have come down here, and you must go back to-night.”

“Ah!” the exile said, “you may indeed be sorry for me. Think what my future must be—poor, friendless, loveless, alone, in a foreign country, struggling, unappreciated.”

“You are only at the commencement of your profession. You will be appreciated. You are a real tenor, you know. What is there that I can do for you? How can I help you?”

“Tell me just once that you love me. I know that we can never be married—that your uncle’s opposition is insurmountable. But the only real part of my future life will be its memories; let there be at least one exquisite memory among them.”

“I cannot say what you want. If I could say *that*, then opposition would amount to nothing. I have a great deal of affection for my uncle, and I owe him much. I should do my best to overcome his opposition, and I think that when he saw all that was at stake I should succeed. But, even if I did not, I should not consider that I owed him the entire happiness of two lives.”

“Do you think, Vera,” he said, speaking in a whisper, “that you will ever be able to say that?”

She looked away from him over the sea.

“I don’t know. I’m not sure,” she said.

“Is there any chance?”

“It is all new to me. You are asking these things too soon—yes, and too late also. Perhaps it might be, perhaps not.”

“Vera, I will go away now—back to London. I will do as you wish. But do not let me lose one slightest chance of the

one thing I desire. Vera, I love you, you only, you always. Let me come back again a fortnight hence, on the night before you leave, at this place and this time. Until then, think often of me. Perhaps it may be that you will be able to say then what you cannot say now. If not, then it will be good-by. May I do that?"

"Yes." She rose and gave him her hand, smiling faintly. "Good-night, then," she said, "and not good-by yet." He held her hand too long, gazed ardently at her with his rather beautiful eyes, and then with foreign grace retired. That foreign grace, together with the slightest possible foreign accent, still remained with him after several years' residence in England. He retained some other characteristics of his nation as well.

He took the road back to the railway station. His fingers, that had seemed, as he talked with Vera, to be making imaginary cigarettes, now made actual cigarettes. As he smoked he fell deep in thought. He was thinking chiefly about himself.

"Fatal!" he murmured to himself. "Given the opportunity and the woman, and I always make love. But always! Yes, even when I have taken an unpleasant railway journey in order to conclude a—an incident—altogether. Vera is charming. Vera is much impressed by my voice." Humming, "Tra-la-la, tra-la-la, la, la, la." Thinking, "Vera has a natural sympathy with the struggling artistic exile. But she has never loved me. It was madness to postpone the final farewell for a fortnight." Humming, "Tra-la-la-la, tra-la, tra-la." Thinking, "The occasion—the romance of the occasion—seemed to demand it. The night is beautiful. Vera also is beautiful. But a fortnight! It is a long time, and much may happen in it. Vera may get to hear of Veronique; then if Vera ever could have cared for me I am ruined. Veronique may hear of Vera; Veronique would never forgive it, and I should be ruined also. Each may get to hear of the other, and then if neither care for me, probably both will. But that is not certain, and would be of no use if it was."

At this moment some vivid recollection of Vera's personality crossed his mind. He pulled himself up. His eyebrows contracted fiercely. "No, no, my friend," he said to himself; "this must not be. In the sacred name of love, it must not be. Put Veronique from your thoughts; Vera claims them all. Even to-night she showed signs of relenting. Possibly in this fortnight she may learn to love you. You will be glad, then, that you

were faithful. Even if she but bids you a last farewell, you will have the consciousness that you have done what is right and noble. Be absolutely true to Vera—absolutely faithful to Vera—for a fortnight." Humming the gayest of *chansons*, he entered the station.

Vera played bezique with Lady Melbrough, and played shockingly badly. Then she went off to bed, outwardly placid, but meditative.

It was on a Wednesday night that the struggling, artistic exile came back to London, with his resolutions all well in hand. On the afternoon following, he remembered an engagement which, if Vera had allowed him to remain at the seaside, he might have forgotten. He was to go round to Veronique's pretty little flat, and try songs. The great and successful Veronique had been pleased to be interested in the exile. No money would induce her to give singing-lessons, but she gave him for nothing what money would not purchase. He had in him the materials for success, and she was going to show him how to use them. He would never, of course, become the musician that she was; but still, he would do well on the concert-platform. It had sometimes occurred to her that she would be more comfortable if she had a husband with her when she was on tour. He was younger than she was, probably, but then she did not know precisely how old she was; he was graceful and had a good appearance. She liked him. But the singing-lesson was taken seriously. She told lies with impartiality about other things, but not about music; and therefore she did not flatter him in the least, in words. But then she gave him over an hour of hard, patient work; and the compliment of the fact remained. And the struggling exile was not the man to miss a compliment in any form. He became almost elated; he became careless in his observance of his resolution to regard Veronique merely as a kind and friendly teacher. He wondered if it was possible that Veronique and her companion, Mrs. Slade, would do him the honor to come and dine with him somewhere. It was possible. It was also done. It was an interesting dinner. Veronique told the story of her early privations; it was an effective story. She had told it frequently, and yet no one had ever found it dull; it was never twice the same.

It was rather late that night when the exile got back to his rooms. He reflected with himself: "In a very little less than

a fortnight you will be returning to Vera, to tell her once more that you love her, and to beseech her to say that she loves you. After what has occurred, do you think that you have the right?" He stroked his chin meditatively for a moment. In that moment his point of view turned the other way up. "It is necessary," he said—aloud, to make it sound truer—"for me on a certain date to go to say good-by to Vera. That, in all human probability, is all it will amount to. Very well, then. Until that day comes, let me at least have the manhood not to insult Veronique by thinking of Vera in any other light than as a friend. I cannot help what has happened. But I can let the past *be* past. Ah, Veronique! What other woman could be loved like you!"

The next letter that Vera received from her uncle contained the following passage:

"Do you remember that tenor you brought here a few weeks ago? Nice little man, rather. He's done well for himself. He's to marry the great Veronique. Of course she isn't what she was; but there's plenty of money—must be. Don't send him your congratulations, as the thing is supposed to be a secret still."

"That will not do, uncle," thought Vera. "You call him a 'nice, little' man, yet you dislike him very much, as a matter of fact, and he's not little. He's engaged to Veronique, is he? Why didn't my dear uncle say the Queen of Sheba at once? And I'm not to write to him on the subject. Of course not, because he isn't engaged, nor likely to be. For such a clever man as my uncle, this seems to me to be a peculiarly stupid trick."

Nevertheless, Vera had moments of uneasiness. In all probability, she decided, she would not want to marry the artistic exile. But that was no reason why the artistic exile should not continue to want to marry her. It was chiefly his pathetic devotion to her that had given him a place in Vera's esteem; if he wavered at all in that, then her esteem would be lost to him; or, to put it in its simplest form, if he became engaged to another woman, Vera would certainly not marry him. As the end of the fortnight drew near, she had moments of believing that she was much in love with him; they vanished before analysis and left her doubtful. "No matter," she said. "There will be no doubt after Tuesday night. When I see him, I shall know my own heart."

On the afternoon of that Tuesday the exile walked towards Victoria Station; he was intending to go down to the seaside,

to sit on the pier watching the sea's constant courtship of the shingle, and there to say good-by to Vera in such a way as to imply, without offending her, that he could only regard her as a friend, that her notion that he was in love with her had never had any grounds, and that he intended to marry Veronique. It was a situation that might have appalled a heavy and insular mind. But the light foreigner felt no uneasiness, his solutions of such difficulties were grandly simple. High spirits would cover the whole thing. He would be in the best of spirits, would laugh, would jest, hum scraps of music, twirl his cane, take nothing seriously, and finally retire with a gracefully raised hat and the slightest possible high handshake, in a general atmosphere of *raillerie* and tra-la-la. But as he walked to the station his arm was lightly touched, and he turned round; he found himself face to face with a young girl, whose expression was one of great vivacity, who looked poor and yet Parisian.

"Jenny!" he exclaimed.

He had known Jenny in the days when he was unromantically poor, before he had climbed the path to genteel and romantic poverty. She was a governess, and in the pursuit of her calling had been for some months abroad. The Dean, whose children she was paid to spank and instruct, kept—so she thought—an eye on the outward aspect of her correspondence, and therefore she had told him not to write too often. He had never written at all. But the story that he told her of the way in which he had mislaid her address and changed his own had in it all the elements of probability. He was a man who frequently mislaid addresses.

"Never," he said, with fervor, "have I seen you look so absolutely charming, charming though you always were."

"I was never half as pretty as my sister Mildred," said Jenny. "Still, I've been living in the place where women do their best for themselves. Now I take a holiday."

"I also," he answered, sighing. "A singer's life! Ah, the work is terrible! If I did not whenever I could leave this stifling London, and get a mouthful of sea air, I should break down altogether."

Jenny looked away from him down the street.

"Going to be away long?"

"No, I return to-night. Really, I doubt if it is worth while. Let us turn into the park, and talk it over. You were always so practical—such an excellent adviser."

Vera came back from the pier. She had spent some skill and stratagem in eluding her chaperone, in order to keep her appointment with the exile; and he, without one word of excuse, had failed to keep his appointment with her. She was very angry, and at last she spoke with her tongue.

"I thought," she said, "that I should know my own heart when I saw him. At any rate, I knew my own heart when I didn't see him."

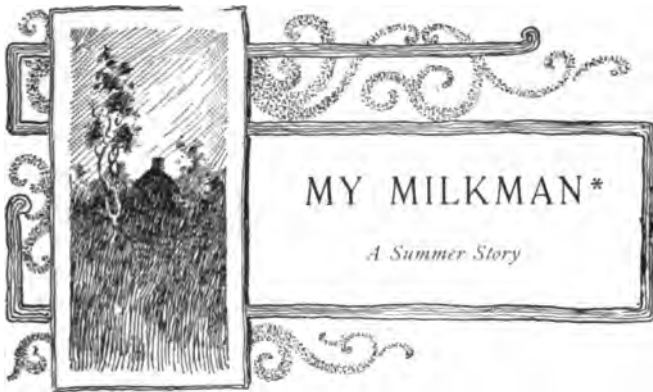
As she had a strong objection to being cheapened in any way, she wrote to him from the North a letter as follows: "How shall I apologize? Perhaps I had better tell the plain truth. There were some very nice people staying there, and I saw a good deal of them—and circumstances arose which put all thought of you clean out of my head, so I forgot all about the appointment. Do not be angry. Even if I had met you on the pier, nothing could have come of it. Still I am sorry you took all the trouble to come from London for nothing."

When the exile read this letter, he was at first pleased, because it seemed a merciful deliverance. But at the reference to "circumstances that had arisen," his brow clouded, and he laughed the bitter, mirthless laugh.

"I see it all," he exclaimed. "The faithfulness of woman!"

Ultimately, Vera snatched a frail young Scotch peer out of the very jaws of an American heiress, and afterwards lived happily. The failure of the exile's attempt to be engaged to both Veronique and Jenny—the betrothals to run concurrently—drove him to desperation, and he married Mildred.





BY KATE GARY RICHARDSON



T was a delicious morning, "such a one as dawns but once a season"—one of those days in early summer when one is glad only to be alive and breathing the fragrant air.

I was sitting on the side porch hulling strawberries and watching the big daisies nodding in the wind over by the fence when the milkman's bell rang. Mary was washing and my mother called to me from the kitchen to get the milk. I took the milk-pail and went slowly down the long path to the gate, more slowly, because I hated the milkman, a dirty youth, most flirtatiously inclined.

It was an agreeable surprise to me when I reached the gate to find a new face behind the milk-cans, a tired-looking man with a well-cut profile and clean-shaven face—clean-shaven and *clean*.

I gave him the pail saying, "Two quarts, please," quite sweetly, considering he was a milkman, but still in a tone which would show him, if he were observant, that I was unaccustomed to getting the milk and felt it rather beneath my dignity.

As he measured it out with the long dipper, there was a funny little smile around his mouth and in his eyes which rather exasperated me, for I considered myself in no way an object of amusement for stray milkmen.

I was very dignified, therefore, in my manner, and went back to the house with my head well in the air. When I found my small brother had decorated said head with a waving asparagus plume erect among my cherished curls, I wished I had tossed it

* Written for Short Stories.—Copyrighted.

less proudly, for I objected to being ridiculous even before a strange milkman.

That evening, when the bell rang, I offered to go for the milk; I had on a pretty white gown and my hair was becomingly arranged. It was not that I cared about the milkman, even though he was "different" from others, but because no girl would like to be remembered looking like a plumed hearse. I had the pleasure, on reaching the wagon, of being complimented on my appearance by the flirtatious milkman whom I detested.

Young men were very few in the village that summer, and so my attention was attracted by this new variety of tradesman. I soon discovered that he came only on the morning round, and if I was at home I would wander around to the kitchen about time he was due and offer, in the most artistically unconscious manner in the world, to get the milk.

Our conversation for some weeks was limited to "How much?" and "Two quarts, please," or "Only one quart this morning;" but one day, after a heavy thunderstorm, during which the lightning had struck a tree in our own yard, we broke through the trammels of trade and discussed electricity instead of milk.

I was charmed by his voice—low, cultured, pleasant. It was only an accident of birth which had given him such a voice, I told myself, but I confessed it a most charming accident.

After that we chatted a few moments every morning. I am even afraid the people on the next block had to wait very often for their milk.

I used to take myself to task vigorously for my growing interest in this gray-eyed milkman, for I knew well enough that my position prevented my making a friend of him.

"*Sylvia Russell*," I said one morning, taking myself metaphorically by the shoulders, "how can you forget yourself so? Fancy asking him to dinner!"



I couldn't fancy it, but no more could I imagine him committing a solecism were he invited, so strongly did he impress one as a gentleman, in spite of the milk-cans.

However, my self-administered shaking led me to forego the pleasure of chatting with him that morning, and to go for a walk to "the village" instead. As I strolled slowly along under the shadow of the thick maples, I heard the milkman's bell, and straightway my traitor feet played me false and turned back in spite of me.

I heard a quick step behind me and then the voice of one of the "summer visitors," a young man I had met a few weeks before.

"What a busy person you are, Miss Russell. You seem in great haste."

"Oh, good morning, Mr. Merriman," said I, slackening my pace. "I didn't know I was walking so rapidly. I am taking a walk for lack of other occupation."

"May I join you?" asked Mr. Merriman, timing his step to mine.

"Certainly," I returned, trying to look unconscious. The milk-wagon was standing at the corner and the milkman, a tall, well-built fellow, stood looking up and down the street, evidently waiting for some one. My heart sank to my boots. Would he bow to me from that wretched wagon? I was ashamed of the thought, since the grocer and the butcher always bowed to me from their delivery wagons without disturbing me. But I hated to have him there. It seemed no place for him; I wondered if he, too, was conscious of that. Then I turned hot and cold. The milkman gave one quick glance at me and my companion, and turned away without giving me an opportunity to bow. I was terribly hurt, and saw how foolish my pride for him was when it appeared in his actions, too. I did not hear what Mr. Merriman was saying; I only knew that the milkman had not spoken to me, and I, the judge's daughter, felt like crying because of it.

"Rather a good-looking fellow, that milkman," remarked Mr. Merriman, carelessly. "I don't think I ever saw him before. He can't amount to much, driving a milk-cart at his age."

I realized the truth of this remark and felt provoked at my companion for making it.

"Perhaps he can't get anything else to do."

"He can't be very brilliant, then ; but, of course, one doesn't expect much from people of that class."

"What class?"

"Why, his, of course. I had no idea you took so much interest in him," laughed Mr. Merriman, seeing my disapproving face. "I dare say he has a widowed mother with nine small children to support."

"Then you shouldn't make fun of him," I said, tartly. "There is no disgrace in driving a milk-wagon *well*."

At my last word, Mr. Merriman shouted, and after a moment I laughed too, but I think he found me in rather a bad temper, though of course he did not connect it with the milkman, for he left me at our gate and did not suggest going in.

I ran to my room and locked the door and cried a little, though I had no idea why, "For, of course, Sylvia," I said to myself, "you don't care what a milkman does."

"You need not be afraid, Miss Russell," said the milkman next morning, "of my speaking to you from the wagon when you are with friends. I have too much respect for myself."

"Oh, surely you don't think——" I stopped suddenly.

"I never think, Miss Russell. It takes all of my time to look after my widowed mother and the twelve—or is it nine?—babies."

Then I knew he had heard Mr. Merriman. I blushed furiously and held up my hand for the pail. I think he saw I was hurt, for he touched my fingers gently as he gave it to me. His touch sent a thrill all through me, but I drew away my hand quickly. Just then Mrs. Sage and two young ladies drove by and stared rather inquisitively, I thought. I was tempted to run into the house when I saw them coming, but conquered the impulse.

When they had passed, he looked at me with the little quizzical look he wore so often.

"Why didn't you go?" he asked.

"Where?" blushing uncomfortably.

"Oh, anywhere; you looked like a sweet pea 'on tiptoe for a flight.'"

He drove on without waiting for my answer. Oh, Sylvia, Sylvia, a milkman quoting poetry to you and you did not snub him.

How I struggled against the fascination the man had for me

during those summer weeks, and how fast my heart learned to beat when I heard that dreadful bell which he rang, ringing as a child would, with the greatest amusement on his face at his own performance. I was sure he knew I would come when he rang and I resented it; but I tried staying in the house for two or three days and missed seeing him so much that I went after that in spite of my resentment.

He was such a queer creature. I never could understand how he could be what he was. We discussed a great variety of subjects while he measured the milk—poetry, religion, politics, novels, flowers, the weather, woman's rights, the milk; and on all subjects but the last I found him surprisingly well informed; on the subject of milk and cows, I thought him amazingly ignorant.

We were speaking one day of the ferns in my fernery, and he told me where I could find a great deal of maiden-hair.

"It is not a long drive," he said. "If you would allow me——" He stopped, flushed a little, then laughed. "Oh, I beg your pardon, I quite forgot." He gathered up the reins and drove on.

Was he going to ask me to drive with him? Me, Sylvia Russell! Oh, if he only were not a milkman, or I a judge's daughter! I *did* want to go with him to find the ferns dreadfully.

I tried to think of some gentle way of hinting to him that his occupation was not worthy of him, but I was a wee bit afraid of those keen, gray eyes of his. At last one morning I blurted out, without a particle of appositeness:

"Are you *always* going to drive a milk-wagon?"

He looked down at me with a little smile.

"I don't know," he said. "Don't you want me to?"

This was carrying war into the enemy's camp with a vengeance. It fairly took away my breath.

"I don't know why I should want you to do, or not to do, things," I said, stiffly. "It was only on your own account."

"You should not, only—I thought, perhaps——" he hesitated, looked a little hurt.

"It don't seem a very lofty occupation," I said, grammatically.

"But the widow and eleven babies, you know. They don't give a man a chance to rise." He said this with hardly becoming gravity, but I felt rebuked.

"Don't you think—if you were to try—you might——" I

looked up, found his eyes on me, and couldn't go on, though he did not seem angry or hurt.

"I have been thinking of going to college soon," he said, after a moment's pause.

"Oh, how charming," I cried; "I am *so* glad for you. When—But the widow and children—your mother, you know, how can you——" then I saw he was laughing.

"There is no widowed mother," he said.

"And no children?"

"And no children."

"Then you can go. But I thought you said——"

"Mr. Merriman said it!" he interrupted.

"How did you know his name," I inquired, curiously.

"I asked, of course. My tongue was given me for that purpose."

"Are you prepared for the exams?" I asked.

"Not—not *quite*," with a queer look.

"If I could help you," I suggested; "I've been to college myself. I'm *very* good in mathematics."

"Oh, *thank* you," he said, with what seemed overstrained enthusiasm. "I'll get through all right, but if I should get stuck in a 'sum,' you'll help me out?"

"Yes, indeed. Do you study alone?"

"Quite alone."

"Isn't it awfully hard?"

"I'm afraid I couldn't study very well—together." He gave me a quick look to see if I understood him. I pretended not to notice.

"I'm sorry to hurry you," I said, "but don't you think Mrs. Morris is waiting for her milk?" He said something about Mrs. Morris under his breath, but prepared to drive on.

"I do so hope you will get on all right," I said. No one was in sight, and I held out my hand to him impulsively. He gave it the warmest little squeeze; not a bit like a milkman.

"Don't you think, Sylvia," said my mother, "that you talk too much to that young man? I dare say he is very nice, but what *would* your father say?"

"I don't know what he could say, mother. I'm not going to elope with him, you know," I went on, laughing a little nervously, the memory of our last chat being still fresh. "He is going to college and I'm—encouraging him."

"I'm afraid you are, Sylvia," said my mother, with a shake of the head.

I did not go for the milk next morning. I think I felt rather guilty. I made gingerbread and packed a basket to take Bob and Bess to the Sound for supper, a treat their youthful souls dearly loved.

After dinner we started in the phaeton—Bob, Bess, the basket and I.

"Now, infants," I said, as we jogged along the road toward the Sound, "you are both to watch for hoppy-toads and the first one we catch we will fry for lunch; unless perchance we find a stray Orthoceratite, under which circumstances we will have a stew."

"Do hoppy-toads taste good?" asked Bob.

"Delicious." I responded. "They will appeal forcibly to your gastronomic tastes, Bob."

"I think I like Orstites better," said Bess.

These small relatives of mine were devoted to me and my conversation, principally, I think, because I used large words. They were very fond of those and understood them well enough; what they didn't understand they enjoyed more; on the same principle that their elders enjoy Wagner or Browning, I suppose.

When we reached the Sound, I tied Prince to a fence in the shade and settled myself in the shadow of a clump of bay-bushes, where I could see the children down on the beach.

The tide was out and Bob and Bess scrambled down the cliff to the water's edge, where they amused themselves "scrunching" barnacles on the wet rocks, and seeing how far they could walk without slipping in, which they did every three or four steps with shrieks of laughter.

When lunchtime came, I whistled on my fingers for the children, a useful accomplishment taught me by Bob. They came climbing up, dirty, hungry, with handkerchiefs full of skate's eggs, periwinkle spawn, pebbles and sea-moss.

I wiped their faces, and set about laying the table; Bess decorated the cloth and Bob turned handsprings in the grass. I had packed rather more lunch than usual and the sight of two fried cake-men elicited shrieks of delight from Bob. He insisted on saying grace, which he did with one hand on the biggest man, for fear Bess should snatch it while he was engaged in religious observances.

When we opened our eyes, there stood the milkman watching

us. He had a book in his hand and looked even more surprised to see us than we were at his appearance.

"Won't you take supper with us?" I said, quite forgetting that he was a milkman. He hesitated a moment, then accepted. Bess looked askance at him for a moment, for she was rather shy with strangers, but was soon amicably offering him an arm of her fried man.

While he was dismembering the victim, I stole a glance at him.

He looked thoroughly high-bred; his clothes were loose but of fine material and unquestionably well-cut; his shoes and the feet within them were faultless in size and shape, though the shoes were rather the worse for wear.

"Pretty old, aren't they?" said he. He had a way of divining my thoughts which was to me marvelous.

"Not *very*," I returned, smiling, and he again turned his attention to Bess.

When the children had finished lunch, nothing could keep them beside me, though I tried my best, for without the excuse of the milk, I found conversation with the milkman embarrassing.

"Miss Russell," he said, looking away from me over the water, "I am going away to-morrow. Won't you try to forget I am the milkman, and remember me only as a friend who—who—likes you very, very much?"

"To-morrow," I echoed. "Surely not *to-morrow*."

"Yes, to-morrow," he was looking at me keenly, "you will miss our little chats over the milk?"

"So much." I was beginning to realize how much, now I knew he was really going.

"And now you will talk to Smith."

"You know I will not." My eyes filled with tears; I looked away from him to conceal them.

"You will let me thank you for the happiness knowing you has been to me?" he went on, after a moment's pause; "I shall miss you so much."

"It has been a pleasure to me, too," I replied a little formally.

He leaned toward me entreatingly,

"You have been so good—so sweet to me all summer, *won't* you forget I am a milkman, just for this little half-hour?"

"I *always* forget it," I said gently.

"You never do, you talk for a few moments and then you remember, and you freeze at once. I don't blame you, but—tell me—is that the *only* reason? If I were not a milkman, would you despise me still?"

"I don't despise you now."

"But I mean, do you think—do you think you could *like* me a little, Miss Russell—Sylvia—I must tell you—I have no right—but I love you. Don't be angry with me! I am going to-morrow. I could not help speaking—but—you won't look at me! Are you *so* angry?" He put his hand pleadingly on my shoulder. I could not answer him. I was so surprised, so happy. I only turned my cheek against his hand. He seemed astounded for a moment, then caught me in his arms.

"Sylvia, Sylvia, *darling*."

We didn't say much for a while, but by and by he said:

"Sylvia, do you think you can bear a severe blow?"

I thought I could endure anything with his arms around me, but a vision of the widow and nine children suddenly loomed up in the distance, and I said faintly:

"I don't know."

"Try, dear. It's this: I don't think you quite understand about me. Sylvia, you see, I'm not a milkman."

"Not a milkman!" I echoed.

"You see, I offered to drive the milk-wagon one day when Smith was ill. I board there, you know. It wasn't much fun until a little woman, with an asparagus plume in her hair, came prancing down the path for the milk."

"But, but—afterwards?"

"Oh, afterwards. I borrowed the milk-wagon at the corner every morning and drove it a block. I wasted a great deal of Smith's time, Sylvia."

"Then what *are* you?" I gasped, holding his arm tightly.

"Only a professor," he said, with mock humility.

"Of what?"

"Mathematics."

"Where?"

"At X. college."

"Then you have cheated me. I'll never forgive you." I drew away from him and began to sob.

"Please forgive me."

"A professor," I repeated amid my tears.

"Sylvia, don't cry! What is the trouble? I thought you

would be pleased, Sylvia." He was plainly nonplussed, though he tried to soothe me in the sweetest way, but I would none of him.

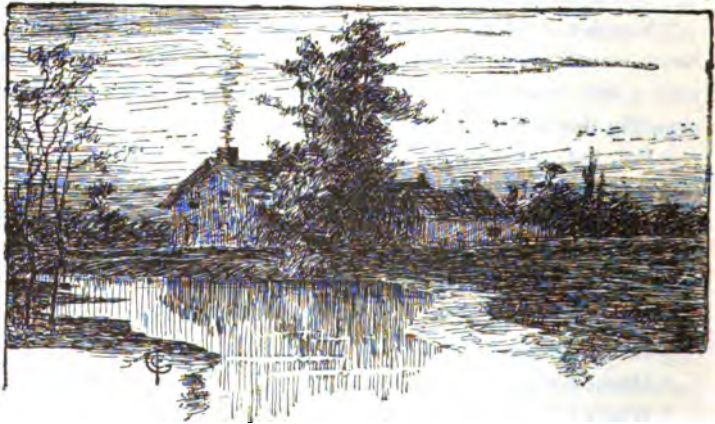
"A professor of mathematics and I offered to help you with your 'sums.' How *could* you," I wailed.

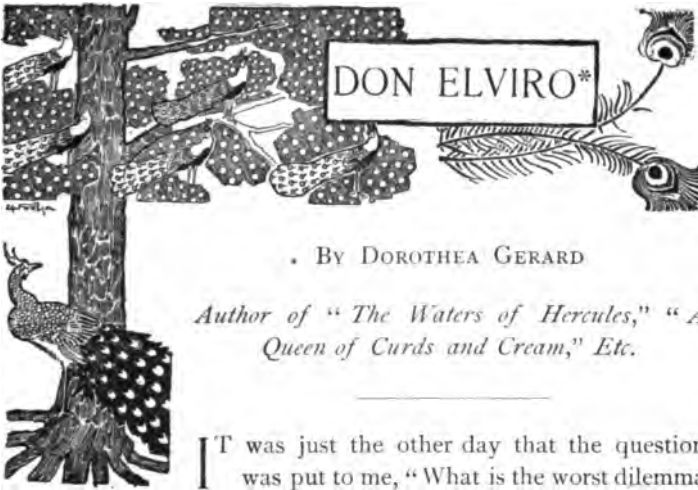
"And so you shall, Sylvia, you shall do them all if you like. Don't be angry any more, Sylvia. I'm going to-morrow."

"*Must* you go?" I cried, putting out my hand to him, and so I tacitly agreed to help him with all his sums.

When the children came from the shore, the ex-milkman packed a couple of very sleepy children, a very empty hamper, and a very happy girl into the phaeton ready for the drive home.

"I'll see the Judge in the morning, sweetheart," he said, and gave my hand a tiny squeeze as he handed me the reins and bade me "Good-night."





• BY DOROTHEA GERARD

Author of "The Waters of Hercules," "A Queen of Curds and Cream," Etc.

I T was just the other day that the question was put to me, "What is the worst dilemma you have ever been in?"

"My adventure with Don Elviro," I unhesitatingly replied.

Here is the story of that adventure :

At that time I had lately emigrated, family and all, to one of the Republican States of South America, having begun to discover that the mother country was treating me in a rather step-motherly fashion, and hoping for better luck from the horse-breeding farm in which I had invested my remaining capital. Outside the limits of our little *estancia* there was nothing but the waste *pampas*, flat as a table, sparsely dotted over with wild apple-trees and stunted cactus, pathless and roadless, and almost printless, except at those places where the ground was torn up by bulls or stamped into holes by thirsty horses on the borders of the streams and pools.

Our life out here was a rather hot and tolerably monotonous idyll. When my wife required a ribbon or a yard of muslin for pinafores, and the supplies from home were late, all we had to do was to get on horseback in the cool of the night, take our bearings across the plain as best we could, ride forty miles into Merquiza, visit the stores, lie in some shady hole all day, and ride back again in the cool of the next night.

Our visiting list was necessarily small, and yet we had a visiting list. Our most constant visitor at one time was a certain Don Elviro Pergez, resident at Merquiza, a tall, silent, ill-favored Spaniard, middle-aged and morose, with a face like tanned buckskin and teeth like a boar's tusks. It was not for our own sakes that Don Elviro visited us, but our farm happened to lie as a

* A selection from "Black and White,"

most convenient halting station between Merquiza and the next farm on the plains, occupied by an old Scotch farmer recently come from Aberdeenshire. This farmer had a daughter—Jessie MacNeill. I had never happened to see the girl, but I had heard her called “The White Flower of the Pampas,” which sounded promising, and everybody knew that Don Elviro had proposed to her some dozen times over to no avail. On the occasion of each of these proposals (which involved two rides of fifty-two miles each, if you please), we had the pleasure of entertaining the enamored Spaniard twice. On his way to MacNeill’s farm he always looked as though he were going to bury his dearest relative; on his way back he looked as though he had not only buried his dearest relative, but had also discovered that his dearest relative had cut him out of the will. At first, being young and sanguine, we attempted conversation, but very soon we contented ourselves with placing cooling drinks before him and assigning to him a hammock and a fan. We had ceased to be surprised at his appearance at any hour of the day or night. This infatuation had become a standing and recognized fact, and in Merquiza, when people saw the dismal Spaniard riding past, the usual remark was: “There is Don Elviro going off to propose to Miss MacNeill;” or else, “There is Don Elviro coming back from proposing to Miss MacNeill.”

One morning very early, just as we were sitting down to breakfast, we saw the familiar, large-limbed figure on the familiar old gray horse pass the window.

“Don Elviro,” said Ada with a patient little sigh, as our eyes met.

We were both rather weary, but we were neither of us surprised, for Don Elviro had passed our way two days before, to have what it was his habit of calling “one more last chance.”

Two minutes later the Spaniard stalked in, looking extremely bilious and more than usually gloomy. The first noticeable thing about his behavior was that he did not bow to my wife, nor, in fact, take any notice of her presence; but, sitting down at the table, proceeded to glare sternly at a sliced pine-apple. During the whole of breakfast not only did he address no word to Ada, but once or twice when she asked him to pass the iced water or the sugar, he simply overlooked the circumstance. Ada tried to rouse my dull masculine sense with significant glances, but I was stupid enough not to see anything amiss, beyond a little pardonable distraction, which I ascribed to Jessie MacNeill’s charms and to her cruelty.

Just as I was starting on my farm rounds Ada caught me in the veranda.

"George," she said solemnly, "Don Elviro is mad."

"Madly in love, you mean."

"No, I don't mean that, I mean that he is simply insane; and, oh, George, just think of a madman in the same house with the children!"

"Very well, I will think of it," I said, and started for the farm with my mind quite at rest about Don Elviro, for though my sweet Ada was a pattern of womanhood, there was no denying that she had both nerves and fancies.

My rounds being over, I had just got comfortably settled for my habitual *siesta* when Ada came in, looking rather excited. She assured me that Don Elviro was certainly mad; but when questioned as to the symptoms, she could accuse the Don of nothing worse than of walking up and down the veranda and not getting out of her way.

"That man terrifies me," she insisted.

"My love, you do the poor old Don far too much honor," I replied. "In spite of his tusks, I warrant him childlike and harmless. Leave him to walk off his steam on the veranda. I sympathize with the man. I am quite sure I should have behaved much worse if you had happened to refuse me."

Ada went out with her nose in the air, and I dropped into heavenly oblivion. I don't think I really expected to be left undisturbed; and so I was not really surprised when right in the middle of the oblivion Ada burst in, this time with the baby in her arms and the two bigger babies clinging to her skirts.

"George," she panted, "now you *simply must* go out to him; he has been muttering, and now he is walking about the orchard without a hat on."

"Well, if he isn't mad yet, that will certainly settle the question," I remarked.

"Take John Fraser with you," my wife implored, "and go and lock him up."

John Fraser was an enormous Lancashireman, a creature of beef and plum-pudding, and the chief bulwark of our household.

"John Fraser has got his leave for the day," I answered. "He must be ten miles from here by this time."

"Oh, George! And Gunez?"

"Gunez went into Merquiza yesterday for the piano-tuner."

"And Carlos and Filip?"

"Out on the plains with the horses."

"This is terrible. But you will go out to him, George, will you not?"

"Yes, I will go," I said, rather sadly, for I was very fond of my *siesta*. And without further delay I followed Don Elviro to the orchard—with two hats, one on my head and one in my hand. If he had a fancy for taking walks in a furnace, there was no reason why he should do so bareheaded. His horse was still picketed among the peach-trees. As I came out of the house he went straight up to it and began fumbling at the bridle.

It was now the very hottest hour of the day, and we were almost at the hottest season. The air tasted like what I imagine to be the taste of finely distilled cinders. The one or two horses left in the *corral* had all lain down; there was an immense stillness over the plain. When I got up to Don Elviro I felt that my forehead was damp, and I knew that my face was scarlet, and yet the Spaniard's face, as I saw it on drawing near, was deadly pale.

"Don Elviro," I said, "what are you doing with that bridle? It is a great deal too hot to think of starting now?"

I had scarcely made this very simple and obvious remark when Don Elviro turned towards me and burst into tears.

This unexpected move checkmated me so entirely that, even after a minute's reflection, I could think of nothing better to say than an earnest exhortation to him not to be a fool, or at least not a bigger fool than was absolutely unavoidable. Then I put the hat on his head, passed my arm through his, and gently but firmly led him back to the house. There I installed him in our cool sitting-room, and lent him my handkerchief to dry his tears, for he had dropped his own in the orchard. He stopped crying just as suddenly as he had begun, and now I was able to take my first good look at his face. I had seen very few maniacs in my life, but even the most casual sight of madmen reveals the odd likeness of expression—family likeness, I am tempted to call it—which their faces bear to one another. The look of the eyes gave me a disagreeable chill. They were small, insignificant eyes as a rule; to-day they seemed to have magically widened and the white was visible above the pupil as well as below it. The pupils themselves were extraordinarily brilliant, and without any wavering either in their brilliancy or in their expression.

I had no further doubt on the subject: here was an

enamored man, six feet two in his stockings, gone stark staring mad on my hands, the thermometer at 95 degrees in the shade, a nervous woman and three babies in the house, and not another man within call.

Having piloted him into a chair, I cast my eye round the room, and seeing nothing more dangerous within reach than cushions and books I took the risk and left him.

Ada and the children were cowering together in my room.

"Well," asked Ada, "is he mad or not?"

"As mad as a March hare and a hatter rolled into one," I replied. "I take it to be a mixture of Miss MacNeill and a sunstroke."

"Have you locked him up?"

"No, but I am going to lock *you* up along with the bairns."

I took them over to the second building at the back, and, putting them into the airiest room, turned the key upon them.

"How are the children to eat?" asked Ada through the keyhole.

"The plates can be handed up by the window. As long as Don Elviro is loose about the place you can't be so."

"Can't you do something for the poor man, George? Give him tea," suggested Ada, in a last desperate whisper through the keyhole, and then the baby began to yell, and Ada's further suggestions were drowned.

I had never heard of tea as a specific against insanity, but in the most perplexing moments of life the heart of the Englishman turns instinctively to the teapot, so I grasped at Ada's suggestion and ordered tea. Then I rejoined Don Elviro, half expecting to find that he had, after all, cut his throat with the ivory paper-knife. But he was sitting exactly as I had left him. Presently a scared maid-servant brought in the tea and bolted.

"What is that?" asked Don Elviro in a voice which sounded somehow as though it had been shaken up in a sack and broken to pieces.

"Tea," I answered, smiling as pleasantly as I could.

When he had finished his first cup he began to fetch a series of tremendous sighs, and it then occurred to me that confidence might relieve his heart and consequently his brain, so I began:

"Don Elviro, you are evidently much troubled about something; I will help you if I can. Have you anything to say?"

"Yes," he immediately replied, "there is something to say." Then in a cold and indifferent voice he added carelessly: "I

have killed Mr. MacNeill." He called him "Señor Maquenelle," by the bye.

Beginning to feel that I was at measurable distance from my wit's end, I turned once more to the teapot and warmly pressed him to take more tea. As for his statement, I instinctively disbelieved it.

He then began to fumble cautiously in an inner pocket. Pistol or dagger? was the only question in my mind, and yet it ended in nothing worse than a handful of piastres which he pressed upon me, saying they were for Señor Maquenelle's soul. I took them thankfully and offered more tea.

I do not expect to be universally believed, but it is, nevertheless, a fact that for five mortal hours we sat there in those same chairs, drinking tea and glaring at each other. From time to time Don Elviro told me that he had killed Mr. MacNeill, and occasionally he rambled on about masses and secret societies, so that, except when some peculiarity in his behavior induced me to sit well forward with my fist in readiness, I had ample time for reflection. The subject on which I chiefly reflected was the beauty of the unknown young lady to whom I owed this lively afternoon. As I sat, straining for the sound of the returning men, and drinking one cup of tepid tea after another, it will, of course, be readily comprehended that I should pour frequent and fervent blessings on the head of the "White Flower of the Pampas."

Not having my watch by me, I could only guess at the approach of evening by the shifting of the sun from one veranda pillar to another. Sometimes the flies bumped against the window nets, and sometimes the cry of the Gauchos on the plains cheered me with a far-off suggestion of humanity.

The sun had left the last veranda pillar when I was inspired to create a diversion by suggesting that the Don had not yet seen our new barley-field. He followed me out with lamb-like docility. As we turned from the barley, oh, blessed sight! Carlos returning from the plains, and—still more blessed sight—John Fraser beside him.

Carlos was delighted with my news and offered to tie up Don Elviro with lassos on the spot, his countenance breaking the while into a brilliant flashing smile. John Fraser's behavior was of a quite different sort. When I told him that Don Elviro was mad he said, "Yes, sir, all right, sir," and his beefy countenance underwent no change. Indeed, I had never seen him

change expression since we left Lancashire ; he did not seem to notice anything peculiar in South America as compared to the neighborhood of Preston.

• The worst of my troubles was now over, at least so I thought, and out of a spirit of contradiction, now that I had help at hand, Don Elviro persisted in looking quite sane. Presently Gunez arrived with Monsieur Rosette, the little French piano-tuner, a withered grasshopper of a man, to whom the travelling mode of the country was a source of gnawing terror, for which reason he invariably performed the forty miles in and out of Merquiza at a foot's pace.

Having placed the madman under the charge of John Fraser, I now went off to visit my captive wife and children. When I returned I found the beefy Englishman standing sentinel beside the sitting-room door, and on entering I was cheered by the sight of Monsieur Rosette holding an agonized converse with Don Elviro across the piano.

As soon as it grew decently dark I marched off the Spaniard to the guest-room, a large whitewashed apartment, where five or six canvas beds always stood ready for emergencies, after which I went to my hard-earned rest and to dreams of Jessie MacNeill. Monsieur Rosette had retired some time ago, not to the guest-room but to the sitting-room, where he was sure he could sleep excellently on the sofa, as he convulsively declared. Subsequently I wrung from him the confession that he passed the whole night sitting on the piano (which he had pushed against the door) with the ivory paper-cutter in one hand and the ink-stand in the other.

About midnight we all started broad awake at the sound of a series of the most terrific shrieks, the sort of shrieks calculated to go through the marrow of a deaf man's bones. A dozen pigs getting killed would have been a mild joke to it. I went into the passage ; terrified maid-servants were wandering about with candles at all sorts of angles, and I ran against Carlos, who was making for the guest-room with a lasso. The moment I knocked at Don Elviro's door the shrieking ceased, and, having with difficulty induced Carlos to relinquish the lasso, I told John Fraser to sleep across the door for the remainder of the night. The creature of beef said, " Yes, sir, all right, sir," and lay down upon the boards. If I had told him to go and draw the tooth of a rhinoceros, I know that he would have said, " Yes, sir, all right, sir," in precisely the same tone.

After this, sleep was granted to us till three in the morning, at which hour the horses had been ordered. There is no need to dwell upon the long and tedious ride, which, however, went off with far less difficulty than I had anticipated, nor upon how, Merquiza being reached, the Don first followed me meekly into the warehouse, which was also the chief haunt of civilization in the place, and then contrived to give me the slip. I shall not easily forget what I mentally underwent when, from the door of the warehouse I perceived Don Elviro far ahead in the sunny street, covering the ground with enormous strides, and making straight for the *plaza*. Seeing me behind him he bolted into the first door at hand, which happened to be that of the guard-room. There I found him planted close beside a row of fixed bayonets, with clenched fists and a sort of "Come-on-if-you-dare" look about him.

Standing at a respectful distance I parleyed with him; two of the officers on duty likewise parleyed with him, but to no avail. At last the medical authority who had been sent for arrived. This was a lame Italian with dyed mustaches and an ivory-headed cane. From a yet more respectful distance than the one I had adopted he commenced to put a series of professional questions in what he evidently hoped was a soothing tone. He asked Don Elviro very respectfully whether his noble and high-born head did not ache? to which the high-born one replied with the snarl of a tiger, that his head was free to ache if it chose. The Italian then inquired with an increase of politeness whether the illustrious Señor was not aware of any buzzing in his ears? Don Elviro overlooked the question and made a movement towards the bayonets. The lieutenant off duty jovially suggested that the doctor should feel the patient's pulse, at which the doctor smiled a rather sickly smile, and at that moment Don Elviro took three steps towards him. One would have been enough; the lame Italian vanished. I did not see him again that day.

I was just beginning to ask myself whether, in default of the medical authorities, I should be justified in handing over my charge to the military, when I caught sight of Mr. MacNeill riding past. That was the man for the post.

"My dear Mr. MacNeill," I said, having given preliminary explanations, "it is clearly your duty to look after your daughter's rejected suitors, especially when they go mad and become a nuisance to other people. I have had this one on my hands

for twenty-four hours by the clock ; I beg now to hand him over to your fatherly keeping."

The sturdy Scotchman seemed to have a conscience, for though he looked dejected, he made no demur.

The rest of this comedy came very near to being a tragedy. Don Elviro was shipped off to Spain, where he had two sisters living, but during the journey he almost succeeded, first in destroying himself, and then in murdering an English cabin-boy. The last thing I heard of him was that he had reached Spain alive, but hopelessly insane, and had been consigned to his sister's charge.

There is only one more word to add, and this touches Jessie MacNeill. Soon after I reached home I announced to Ada my intention of making the girl's acquaintance.

"I have seen the effect," I said, "and now I want to see the cause."

"Oh, really?" said Ada rather coldly. Somehow she did not seem very keen about my visit to the "White Flower of the Pampas;" I even caught something about "idle curiosity."

"But it is not idle curiosity," I answered, "it is praiseworthy zeal. I mean to address to the young lady a few words of paternal advice concerning her flirtations."

"Oh, very well, as you like," said Ada. And so I went.

When I reached MacNeill's farm I asked a blowsy young woman, who was hemming an apron on the veranda, whether I could see Miss MacNeill. She stared at my question. She was excessively red-faced and had a great deal of very light-colored hair of that peculiar lint-white which can either be so pretty or so ugly. A horrible suspicion dawned in my mind; and yet when, in broad Scotch, she informed me that she was Miss MacNeill, the shock was so great that I remained deprived of speech for a considerable number of minutes. In England we might, perhaps, by a stretch of good nature, have called her "comely" or, at any rate, "buxom." Transplanted to a climate where black eyes and olive complexions were the order of the day, she had become the "white flower of the plains."

Yes, her hair was undoubtedly of the palest lint color, and looked paler still by contrast with her peony-red cheeks. And I had had visions of an alabaster skin!

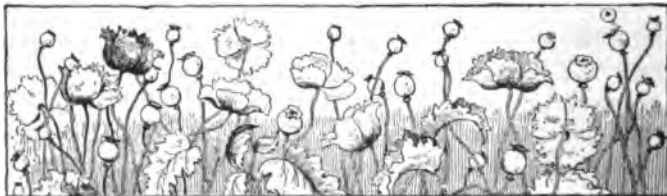
I did not dismount. If Miss MacNeill had turned out to be a radiant beauty, there might possibly have been some glory in the memory of those many, alas! so many, cups of tepid tea

which I had drunk in her honor. But, having once seen the cause, the effect became ludicrous, and the tea—looked back upon—seemed more than ever like ditch-water.

"And the moral of the story," laughed Ada gayly, when, on my return, I described Miss McNeill, "is, that you should not flirt, or, at any rate, not with Spaniards."

"I don't believe she could flirt if she tried," I answered dejectedly. "The moral of the story is that no rejected lover shall ever again enjoy the hospitality of my roof, or at any rate, not until we live a little further from the Equator. To the weary peddler my door shall be open, even to the wandering gypsy, but to the rejected lover—no."

As far as we were concerned, the last act of the comedy closed here. The only effects which it left behind it were, on my side, a distinct repugnance to afternoon tea, and, on the side of Monsieur Rosette, a still more distinct repugnance to tuning our piano.





THE JINNEE*

BY CLAUDE M. GIRARDEAU



WOODVILLE had been riding for hours, following the vermilion road; his horse's feet slipping now as if on ice, now sinking fetlock deep in the ruddy, mucilaginous clay. He drew rein on a breathless elevation and looked about him, the smoke rising from Mahu's heaving barrel and sleek flanks. On all sides frowned the forbidding blue walls of the great ranges and spurs of the Balsams.

The nearer foothills were mottled with dead leaves, the dull sky showing white between the black limbs of their stark forests. A tortuous creek made an icy murmuring as it fretted in shallow falls over the knife-edged rocks of its precipitous course. The declining sun was completely shrouded by a dun-colored mass of cloud that stretched from horizon to zenith, against which the keen wind tortured the tree-limbs.

Woodville shuddered under its freezing whips, pressed his heavy cap closer upon his head, and urged his horse forward and upward.

* Written for Short Stories. Illustrations by W. E. Parker.—Copyrighted.

The gorges grew wilder and more fearful, the road winding upon the lip of them, a blood-red riband.

The miniature cataracts began to show a fringe of fragile ice.

Through the naked woods could be seen the triangular camp-sheds of the Indians, deserted, but offering a shelter windward with their hoarded leaves.

Woodville looked at them longingly as his jaded horse panted up the steep with quivering knees and strongly arching crest.

But he held his way until the ridge was reached, disclosing a wide plateau, sown with stiff grass, and dotted with oaks in whose swollen joints, rough bark, and protuberant wens he read their fierce struggle with the blast that even then was sweeping the exposed height with a roar as of innumerable harp-strings.

He alighted, tied his horse near a thicket of rhododendrons shaded by hemlocks, and advanced to the bold rocks jutting savagely out two thousand feet above the gorge. The dense, rolling cloud-vapor obscured the magnificence of the view, but presently a sun-burst flamed suddenly—a celestial and dazzling radiance crowned the peaks and ridges for a brief instant—then vanished as the white glare of the rain advanced its phantom banners swiftly through the serried ranks of pine and balsam forests.

Woodville retreated to Mahu's side and looked more narrowly about him.

"Can it be that I have taken the wrong road?" he said aloud. "There is no sign of a dwelling here."

Just then it seemed to him a figure flitted past in the wet obscurity of the downpour. He had a mere gliff of it, but it left him uncertain and cold with something beside the rain.

He pressed a wet hand to his face, brushing aside the drops that hung on his eyelashes. But the thing—the shadow—was gone. He had an after-sense, like an echo of the sight, which seemed a recollection of a gibbous shape; the gleam of eyes, as behind a veil; the turning of a neckless head. He strained his eyes and stood close to his horse, who, with flattened ears and dimpling back, tugged at his halter to be gone.

"S-ho, old fellow," coaxed his master, "we are in a fool's plight—but, patience!"

He took the bridle over his arm, glad of the companionship even of a brute, and, scarcely knowing why he did so, followed a road leading from the thicket to a still greater elevation.

It was full of holes and stumps, and the rain beat in his face

and poured from his oilskin coat. Half-way up, again the shadow flitted across the blurred semi-sphere of vision. Woodville stopped involuntarily; the horse reared, plunged, and snorted violently. His master coaxed and pacified him and continued his way, gripping the revolver in an outer pocket.

On gaining what appeared in the dusk to be the mountain-top, the dark bulk of a cabin barred their way. The door was half-open. With unaccustomed apprehension Woodville hesitated to go in. He fastened the trembling Mahu to a tree and searched about in the heaps of dead leaves. Finding some dry sticks, he lighted a pile of trash and from the fire seized a torch. Holding it in one hand and his cocked revolver in the other, he flung himself upon the half-open door, forcing it inward flat upon the wall.

The one room of the hut was absolutely empty, its solid window shutter battened tight.

He stuck the torch into a chink and built a roaring fire in the gaping mud-chimney.

Then leading in Mahu from the savage rain, he secured the heavy door with its long wooden arm and socket, and stripped off saddle and blanket.

Drying the blanket before the blaze, he fell to rubbing down the horse, who was a splendid trout-colored stallion, white muzzled, with dark stainings on his legs; strong and arched of neck, deep of chest, with a small head and wide, soft eyes, which he now rolled from side to side in uneasy astonishment. He stamped upon the hard earth floor of the hut, and wheeled about its narrow confines, running his nose along the mud-chinked walls, and snuffing and pawing at the dripping threshold.

Woodville had taken off his oilskin, and was warming himself by the fire. He was compactly dressed in a hunting-suit of heavy corduroy, almost the color of his horse. He had kicked off his rubber boots and displayed sinewy legs strapped with leather. He rumbled his hair with his hands, and as it dried before the blaze it turned from brown to bronze, reflecting the dancing light metallically. His eyes, half shut against the warmth, seemed to be a deep, clear hazel; his skin, a warm white.

There was a sleek and sinewy look about his whole person, from his fine elastic hand to his well-shaped, well-shod foot. He snapped a thumb and finger, and called to Mahu, who was

still at the door snuffing and whiffing. The horse wheeled, shoving his nose into Woodville's elbow.

"What is it, old fellow? Does the wind string you up as it does me?" The fierce blast went shrieking infernally about the height, humming away in the great distance like a Titanic æolian.

"Ye gods! But it sets one's nerves on edge." He turned his back to the fire, watching Mahu's uneasy manœuvres. Presently the horse whirled about with a shrill squeal, and let fly his heels at the door, splintering it.

"S—ho!" cried Woodville, backing him into a corner. "You fool! What the devil is in you? Would you rather be out in that driving rain than in a warm stall by the fire?" For answer Mahu lifted his lip, displaying his teeth, flattened his quivering ears suddenly, transforming himself into a dangerous wild beast, his thin nostrils puffed fire-red, the blue-whites of his eyes showing around the dilated pupils in sudden circles. His gaze was directed, not at Woodville, but toward the fireplace. Woodville looked over his shoulder, then crouched against the horse's neck, his eyes starting, his lips apart, showing his clenched teeth. At one corner of the wide chimney, just outside the glow of light and yet illumined by it, sat something.

An outline, like a faint pencil drawing, slightly shaded here and there, yet curiously distinct—a mere sketch, but by a master hand. It took but the blink of a second to observe the gibbous line of back, the shaggy forelock screening the gleam of cavernous eyes; the pendulous hands and distorted feet; the singular bluish tinting of the figure through which the dull, ochreous walls showed plainly as flesh may show through tissue.

The bar of the door was within reach. In a flash Woodville lifted it. A thundering burst of wind and sleet and rain scattered the blazing fagots on the floor. And in its teeth, sweeping it down, piercing it, not feeling it, rushed the horse, his master on his back. Like a thunderbolt he sped down the road in the frequent blue and green glare of the lightning, taking the fallen logs in his stride, leaping the stumps that dotted the dangerous way, and bursting into the plainer declivity with all the power of uncontrollable terror.

Near the mountain's foot stood a cabin, through whose door and rough casings the firelight shone redly. By this time, Woodville had got the bridle into his hands, and soothing

the frantic horse with hand and voice, brought him to a standstill at the mountaineer's gate.

It was hopeless to be heard in the howling storm, so he rode into the yard and beat on the door with a fist.

It was cautiously opened and held with difficulty.

"Can you take me in for the night?" he asked.

A lantern was flashed in his face.

"Come in," said a woman's voice.

"Not until I put up my horse. Have you a stable?"

There was a mutter of voices. Presently a man slouched out, the lantern in his hand.

He looked from man to horse, then led the way to the rough barn.

When Mahu was quiet enough to munch at the provender before him, the two men went back to the cabin.

"Don't you w'ar no hat?" asked a woman abruptly, as they came in.

"Sometimes," replied Woodville, going to the fire.

The man looked slyly at him.

"I reck'n you w'ars hit when you rides a saddle?"

"Yes," replied Woodville abstractedly.

Then asked suddenly:

"Who lives upon the mountain?"

"Up thataway?" queried the woman, jerking her thumb over her shoulder.

"Yes."

"Ho, ho!" roared the man.

The woman gaggled like a goose.

They nodded their heads together, making such hunched, distorted profiles on the walls that Woodville felt a sudden curious sensation.



The next thing he knew the woman was holding him upon a chair, while the man poured a stream of liquid fire down his throat. A burst of coughing brought him to his senses.

"Water," he gasped—"water, for heaven's sake!"

His eyes fell on the bed opposite him. A woman was sitting up in it, staring at him, the patchwork quilts drawn up to her neck.

Two plaits of hair hung like ropes over each shoulder, one dangling over the side of the bed to the floor.

Her staring eyes were intensely dark, so that her hair took on the color of corn-tassels and looked as much green as yellow.

Her cheeks and lips were stained with vivid carmine. She bit at the full lower lip with teeth like a row of corn.

Woodville was coughing until the veins swelled on his forehead and neck like blue cords.



The girl sprang from the bed, snatched up a gourd from a bucket and held it to his lips.

"You-uns hain't got a grain o' sense," she said curtly to the others.

"D'ye reckon ever'-body who wears breeches kin drenk that thar raw stuff clare—thataway?"

She looked scornfully at the man.

"I reckoned——" he began apologetically.

"You're a plum fool," said the girl calmly; "nex' time don't reckon, an' mebbe then you'll do ez well. Feelin' better?"

"Thanks, yes," replied Woodville.

She brought her face close to his.

"Why didn' you spen' th' night up thar? Th' cabin's good ez this yere one, hain't it?"

"I daresay."

"But the comp'nys not ez good, hey?"

"Not quite," he replied, pulling himself together and returning her look.

"Wha' did you go up thar fer?" she continued, with blunt curiosity.

"I have been spending the fall in Asheville," he replied "and Baron—someone bet me I would not spend a night in that cabin. I took the bet, like an ass. And here I am."

"How much did ye bet?" pursued the girl.

"A thousand dollars," he said, a little impatiently.

Her delicate lips dropped apart.

"A—thousand—dollars—my land!"

Her breast rose and fell under her pink calico bedgown with the wonder of it.

"An' you didn' stay!"

"Would *you* stay up there, all night, for a thousand dollars?"

"A thousand dollars!" she repeated, "I would do anything fer a thousand dollars."

Then whispered at his ear:

"Did he bet you you wouldn' stay up thar *by yourself*?"

"No," he said, thinking a moment, "but that was understood, of course."

"If he didn' *seh* so," she whispered, "I'll stay thar with you fer a thousand dollars."

He was startled both by her tone and by her flat, unvarnished English.

"Air you afred?" she continued, with indescribable inflection.

"Afraid isn't the word," answered Woodville frankly. "I never backed out of anything before in my life, but—God! I wouldn't face that Thing again for ten thousand dollars."

She looked at him with a curling lip, went back to bed, drew the quilt over her head, and retired from society.

There was another bed in an opposite corner. To it the older woman pointed:

"When you air ready to hit the bed, thar 'tis, Mister——."

"Woodville," he replied.

——"Mister Woodville, you an' Bob kin sleep thar, an' I'll sleep with Tremella."

"No," said Woodville, "the floor before the fire will suit me better, for I am soaked to the skin."

She brought a horse-blanket from a corner, Woodville wrapped himself in it, and presently fell asleep.

In a short while Bob's snores vibrated musically through the

hut. Toward midnight Woodville awoke, piled more wood on the fire, and sat before it, wondering if he were dreaming. He glanced uneasily around and was startled by the sight of Tremella's plait on the floor. He felt sure that should he follow its serpent length to the edge of the rough bed he would meet the gaze of her fathomless eyes. She was indeed overlooking it, her head flattened on her hand, as a wild-cat may flatten itself upon a ledge to look down.

Susceptible as he was to beauty, he was more repelled than attracted by hers. Her coarse feet and rough hands belied her lovely face, and beautiful as was her figure, there was something immanent in its graceful curves that was repulsive to him.

He wondered at himself, recalling her face, but he would not look up to refresh that recollection, and presently lay down again. He closed his eyes, but as long as he was conscious of her gaze he could not fall asleep.

Presently she gave a low laugh, stretched her supple body and turned over upon her face.

At daybreak Woodville took a look at Mahu and found him none the worse for his night's experience, save a slight stiffness. "I do believe," he said, caressing the horse, "you have forgotten everything that happened."

Mahu whinnied gently.

"Come out," said his master, "let me see you move about, old fellow."

The horse curvetted around the inclosure, head up, tail spread like a banner.

"Goin' to ride him up the mounting ag'in?" asked a voice at Woodville's side.

Mahu reared and wheeled. Woodville ran up to him.

"No. You had better keep away," he added, as Tremella drew near.

"I never see a hoss that color befo'," she said curiously. "Is he yourn?"

"Why, yes."

"Wher' did you git him?"

"He was given to me."

"I reckon you think a right smart lot o' him, don't you?"

"I do."

"Is he easy-goin'? Kin he pace?"

"Yes."

"I'd like a heap ter ride him."

"He is not fit for a woman to ride."

"I reckon you never see me ride," said Tremella smiling. "Ther' hain't nare a hoss on this yere mounting I kain't ride."

"I am sorry to seem disoblighing," said Woodville, leading Mahu to the stable, "but I will never see you ride this horse."

"Don't you be too dead sure o' that," she said laughingly.

She observed him from the tail of her dark, humid eye.

"Take my advice, Miss Tremella," he replied, coming out and opening the gate, "and let my horse alone. He will probably kill you, if you do not."

She discovered that the gate was held open for her.

She went through it and walked at Woodville's elbow.

"You hev to git yer things from the mounting, don't yer?" she queried.

"Yes."

"Don't you want me to he'p you fetch 'em down?"

"I am going to walk," he replied.

She laughed again.

"I'll bet you a thousand dollars you kain't outwalk me. Wha' d'ye take me fer? A town lady?"

"If you really care to take such a tramp I shall be glad of your company," answered Woodville, wondering if he meant it.

After a villainous breakfast they set out.

Tremella carried her bonnet in her hand and Woodville studied her profile as she swung along at his side. Her color deepened until her cheek wore a deep stain of vivid crimson. To his relief she was too intent on thought for her displeasing familiarity, and her knitted brow and introspective eyeball gave her a sybilline look that heightened her beauty strangely. The morning was by no means clear. The sky was filled with a scud of cloud; the wind was strong and cold.



Tremella stopped in her tireless stride to drink at a trickle of water from the rock.

They stood on a ledge. Behind them rose the sheer gray rocks ; before them the gorge fell a thousand feet, the naked trees stabbing its sides like giant daggers.

"Wha' did ye see las' night?" Tremella inquired abruptly of Woodville.

He hesitated, then told her, his voice dropping in spite of himself to a husky aspirate.

She shuddered, looking about her as if the hideous apparition might lurk near even in daytime.

"Mebbe you don't know what they-uns, hereabouts, say?" she half whispered.

"No; what is it?"

She drew nearer him and dropped her voice.

"They do say thar's something hid up thar, but whether hit's a dead man, er what, nobody don't know. An' what's more, nobody's got grit 'nough to fin' out."

She looked aslant at Woodville.

"Hit's daytime. I hain't skeered o' nothin' in daytime—long's I kin see."

"But we have nothing to dig with," replied Woodville. "We should have brought a spade."

"I'll git somethin'," said Tremella, beginning to walk again. They trudged upward for an hour or so. At intervals a flier of wind stung their faces with sleet needles. Woodville thought his companion must be half frozen, but her face retained its blood color until, tramping silently in the cold grayness, with mist-wreaths veiling the path ahead of them, old German legends of vampires and witch-wives began to swim in his brain.

Presently Tremella left the road and went to an Indian camp not far away. She groped among the leaves and came back with a rusty spade.

Woodville took it from her and shouldered it.

At last the plateau was gained. They toiled up to the cabin.

The wind was blowing a perfect gale, snapping off tree-limbs and bending the young trees like withes. A flying branch struck Tremella on the cheek. The rich blood spurted and ran down her neck. Woodville's nerves were strung to such a pitch that he cried out—with delight!

She had blood in her veins then. The wind snatched the cry from his lips and tore it to pieces before it reached her ear.

They stopped at the cabin.

Tremella staggered in, breathless, wiping her bloody face with her sunbonnet.

Woodville took up the oilskin. "Put it on," he said; "you must be nearly frozen."

She cowered down on the saddle, ramming her hands in the coat-pockets.

Her fingers closed on the revolver. Her first impulse was to draw it out; her second, to say nothing. And so she sat, watching Woodville as he built a blazing fire.

"Now!" he exclaimed, with a sudden veer of spirits, "let us get to work. Where shall I begin?"

"Thar!" she replied laconically, pointing to the corner of the chimney-place just beyond the glow of light. Woodville hesitated.

"Ef you lose yore thousan' dollars," she said jeeringly, "mebbe you'll fin' enough ter pay hit with."

The chance shaft, feathered by her wit, struck home.

"You witch!" he said, half laughing.

"Don't you call me by no sich of a name," she cried out angrily, her eyes glowing.

She half rose from the saddle, clinching her hand.

Woodville looked at her in surprise. "I never knew a woman to object to it before," he answered.

"Well, I do," she retorted sharply. "How'd I know what you mean by hit? Hit's a hard name, anyway you say hit."

"All right," replied Woodville, "I beg your pardon."

He struck the hard floor with the spade and pierced it with difficulty. Then dug down for a space of a foot or so in depth, and perhaps two feet in width.

He finally stopped, panting and perspiring.

"There is no use. There is nothing here. Too bad to disappoint you."

"Dig a leetle fu'ther," she begged, "jist a leetle—or say, lemme dig. I kin dig jist ez well ez you kin, any day."

He shrugged his shoulders, but dropped the spade into the hole, letting it fall of its own weight. It rebounded with a dull clang. Tremella sprang up.

"What's that? What air you a-tryin' to hide thar? You kain't fool me."

"Wait, wait a moment!" cried Woodville, shoveling out the dirt carefully and rapidly, uncovering as he did so a metal box. He felt about with the spade for its shape.

Tremella was at his elbow peering into the hole. She gave a sudden shriek, went down on her knees, and tore at the box.

"Hold on—stop!" cried Woodville, "the thing is either locked or clamped. I must burst it open with the spade."

Its weight made it immovable. He struck at the lock; the lid flew up violently—a dazzle of yellow gold struck their eyes. Woodville stood daft, staring down at Tremella.

She groveled on the ground, thrust both arms into the hoard of coins, screamed—laughed with insane delight.

"Well," said Woodville, repelled by her joy, "I will give you your thousand dollars now."

"You mean," she said, getting up, both hands full of gold, "you mean, I reck'n, thet I'll give you yore thousan' dollars. I'll give you jist enough ter pay yore bet, an' nare 'nother cent."

Woodville stared at her for a second.

"Of course," he said, quietly, "I will divide with you whatever amount may be in the box."

"'Vide with me!" cried Tremella. "This yare money's mine. All of hit. Would you a-foun' hit 'thout me? Hit b'longs to me. All of hit."

"Not exactly," replied Woodville, lazily. "Not by half. I will give you half."

Tremella had thrust her hands into the oilskin pockets. Again her fingers closed upon the revolver. Woodville stood with his



back to her, looking into the box. She drew her right hand from the pocket, then flung it up. Woodville turned to speak to her and received the ball in his breast. He gave a gasping cry, staggered and fell at her feet.

She stood staring at him, stepping aside to avoid the dark stream that ran from his body toward her.

The fire was low and the light in the cabin grew dim.

She walked around the dead man and looked again into the box; the money was really there.

She stooped, insinuated the revolver into Woodville's right

hand, then shut the box and threw earth over it again. She buttoned the oilskin closely around her, put Woodville's hat on her head, picked up the saddle, and stepped out of the hut, hooking the door behind her. As she went down the path something occurred to her. She retraced her steps, and swept an armful of leaves against the cabin door. It looked as if the wind had blown them there.

Then she hurried away. It was nearly two o'clock.

It took her quite two hours to descend the mountain, weighted as she was with the saddle, for the wind buffeted her and she staggered as she went. She was not conscious of hunger, but she felt unpleasantly empty and light-headed.

At four she reached home. Bob was away, but his wife, Tremella's sister, came to the door.

"Where's the stranger?" she asked.

"Sent me fur his hoss," replied Tremella. "I'm dead beat out. Gimme somep'n to eat, an' stir you'self about hit, fur hit's gittin' dark an' stormy ag'in, an' I'm boun' tuh git back."

"What on the face o' th' yarth air you a-runnin' that ther' man's yerran' fur?" inquired her sister, sharply. "Why didn' you tell him to come an' git his own hoss? An' a-w'arin' of his hat, too! You called Bob a fool las' night, an' I never see a bigger one than you air, right now. I'm plum ashamed o' you."

"Oh, hol' yore mouth an' gimme that thar pone," cried Tremella, savagely. She seized the bread and bit into it as she went out of the house.

"I'll eat ez I go," she said, making for the stable.

As she wore his master's hat and coat, Mahu came out without giving much trouble.

He seemed to have entirely recovered from his stiffness, but before strapping the saddle on him, Tremella endued her heels with a pair of spurs. She screamed to the other woman to open the gate, leaped on his back, touched him gently in the ribs, and was gone. She did not have a chance to eat the pone, for she had both hands full when Mahu discovered by some horse-reasoning that he was ridden by a woman.

But the steep road and the cannonading wind reduced his spirit considerably.

As for Tremella, she sat him like a man, filled to the throat with the joy of the fierce ride. She gave loose rein to her imagination.

She exulted in her freedom.

Woodville shot himself accidentally. How fortunate that he faced her when she fired.

A ball in the back could not have been explained away. But now—how plain was everything. The money was her's. Mahu, the glorious, was her's. The world was her's. All that lay beyond that grim, forbidding wall—the gay cities—the jocund life—the homage paid to beauty such as her's. Ah! had the dead man, had Woodville, paid that homage he had been alive even now. But his delicate repulsion, his curious scrutiny, his courteous coldness had filled her with a black rage.

No other man had ever met with such self-possession the long look of her dark eyes.

All these things welled up inarticulately, confusedly, within her darkened brain.

She struck Mahu upon the withers with the stinging whip of her hair. He reared, and plunged up the height, his heart



bursting with the strain. She held him to the middle of the road with her keen spurs.

How dark it was growing! The long, quivering ululare of the wind wailed through the bending trees.

Ahead of her she caught the open gleam of the ledge, where a few hours before she had stopped to drink.

The panting horse rushed at the open space, gained it, wheeled upon the lip of the precipice. Midway the road, ten paces from them, appeared a figure, glimmering into view. Through its gibbous shoulder, its shaggy locks overhanging deep-sunken eyes; through its pale outline and diaphanous tint of glaucous blue, gleamed the gray rocks and writhing trees.

With an unearthly scream the horse reared upright, quivered



for an instant on the ledge, unheeding the driven spurs, then fell backward—crashing down sheer a thousand feet.

A party of mountaineers, headed by Bob, bent over the dead man. "Shot hisself, by heaven!" said one of them.

"What's he been a-diggin' fur, I wonder?" said another.

"Thet's why he sent Tremella fur thet hoss o' his'n," mused Bob, scooping out the hole.

He gave a loud cry. The others left the dead man and hastened to him. He warned them back. "Mine!" he shrieked, "hit's mine!" They shoved him aside and looked into the hole. A dozen hands lifted the box to the floor.

"Hit's mine!" screamed Bob, "hit b'longs tuh me! He sent Tremella fuh the hoss!"

He struck a man who was filling his pockets greedily.

They grappled and fought like wild animals.

Another man, kneeling by the box, rang a coin on the hearth-stone, then bit it and rubbed it. "Separate them fools," he said tersely. "I say, Bob, I wouldn' go p-plum distracted over a box full o' tin, er brass, ez hit may be."

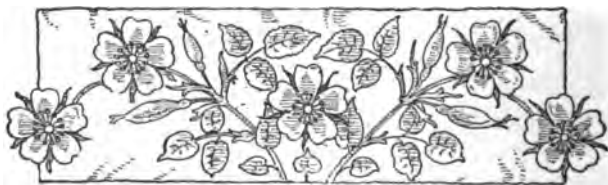
He stuttered a little as he spoke.

"What!" yelled Bob.

The others fell back.

The dead man's staring eyes seemed to scrutinize the speaker.

"Wh-why, yes," he stuttered, "th-the stuff is c-counterfeit."





FTER THE INQUEST

BY W. W. JACOBS

IT was a still, fair evening in late summer in the parish of Wapping. The hands had long since left, and the night watchman having abandoned his trust in favor of a neighboring bar, the wharf was deserted.

An elderly seaman came to the gate and paused irresolute, then seeing all was quiet, stole cautiously on to the jetty, and stood for some time gazing curiously down on the deck of the billyboy Mary Ann lying alongside.

With the exception of the mate, who, since the lamented disappearance of its master and owner, was acting as captain, the deck was as deserted as the wharf. He was smoking an evening pipe in all the pride of a first command, his eye roving fondly over the blunt bows and untidy deck of his craft to the clumsy stern, when a slight cough from the man above attracted his attention.

"How do, George," said the man on the jetty, somewhat sheepishly, as the other looked up.

The mate opened his mouth, and the pipe fell from it and smashed to pieces unnoticed.

"Got much stuff in her this trip?" continued the man, with an obvious attempt to appear at ease.

The mate, still looking up, backed slowly to the other side of the deck, but made no reply.

"What's the matter, man," said the other testily; "you don't seem over and above pleased to see me."

He leaned over as he spoke, and laying hold of the rigging, descended to the deck while the mate took his breath in short gasps.

"Here I am, George," said the intruder; "turned up like a bad penny, an' glad to see your hansum face agin, I can tell you."

In response to this flattering remark, George gurgled.

"Why," said the other, with an uneasy laugh, "did you think I was dead, George? Ha, ha! Feel that!"

He fetched the horrified man a thump in the back which stopped even his gurgles.

"That feel like a dead man?" asked the smiter, raising his hand again. "Feel"——

The mate moved back hastily.

"That'll do," said he, sulkily. "Ghost or no ghost, don't you hit me like that again."

"A' right, George," said the other, as he meditatively felt the stiff gray whisker which framed his red face. "What's the news?"

"The news," said George, who was of slow habits and speech, "is that you was found last Tuesday week off St. Katherine's stairs, you was sat on a Friday week at the Town o' Ramsgate public house and buried on Monday afternoon at Lowestoff."

"Buried!" gasped the other. "Sat on! You've been drinking, George."

"An' a pretty penny your funeral cost, I can tell you," continued the mate. "There's a headstone being made now—'Lived Lamented and Died Respected,' I think it is, with 'Not Lost, but Gone Before,' at the bottom."

"'Lived respected and died lamented,' you mean," growled the old man. "Well, a nice muddle you've made of it between you. Things always go wrong when I'm not here to look after them."

"You ain't dead, then?" said the mate, taking no notice of this unreasonable remark. "Where've you been all this long time?"

"No more than you're master o' this 'ere ship," replied Mr. Harbolt, grimly; "I've been a bit queer in the stomach an' I took a little drink to correct it. Foolish like, I took the wrong drink and it must have got into my head."

"That's the worst of not being used to it," said the mate without moving a muscle.

The skipper eyed him solemnly, but the mate stood firm.

"After that," continued the skipper, still watching him suspiciously, "I remember no more distinctly until this morning, when I found myself sitting on a step down Poplar way and shiverin' with the morning newspaper and a crowd around me."

"Morning newspaper!" repeated the mystified mate. "What was that for?"

"Decency. I was wrapped up in it," replied the skipper. "Where I came from or how I got there I don't know no more than Adam. I s'pose I must have been ill. I seem to remember taking something out of a bottle pretty often. Some old gentleman in the crowd took me into a shop and bought me these clo's, an here I am. My own clo's and the £30 o' freight money I had in my pocket is all gone."

"Well, I'm hearty glad to see you back," said the mate. "It is quite a home-coming for you. Your missis is down aft."

"My missis? What the devil's she aboard for?" growled the skipper, successfully controlling his natural gratification at the news.

"She's been with us these last two trips," replied the mate. "She's had business to settle in London, and she's been going through your lockers to clean up like."

"My lockers!" groaned the skipper. "Good heavens! there's things in them lockers I wouldn't have her see for the world; women are so fussy an' so fond o' making something out o' nothing. There's a pore female touched a bit on the upper story what's been writing love letters to me, George."

"Three pore females!" said the precise mate; "the missis has got all the letters tied up with blue ribbons. Very far gone they was, too."

"George," said the skipper in a broken voice, "I'm a ruined man. I'll never hear the end o' this. I guess I'll go an' sleep for'ard this voyage and lie low. Be keerful you don't let on I'm aboard, an' after she's gone 'ome I'll take the ship again and let the thing leak out gradually; come to life bit by bit, so to speak. It won't do to scare her, George, and in the meantime, I'll try an' think o' some explanation to tell her. You might be thinking, too."

"I'll do what I can," said the mate.

"Crack me up to the old girl all you can; tell her that I used to write to all sorts o' people when I got a drap o' drink in me; say how thoughtful I always was of her. You might tell her about that gold locket I bought for her an' got robbed of."

"Gold locket?" said the mate, in tones of great surprise. "What gold locket? First I've heard of it."

"Any gold locket," said the skipper, irritably; "anything you can think of; you needn't be pertikler. Arter that, you can drop little hints about people being buried in mistake for others, so as to prepare her a bit—I don't want to scare her."

"Leave it to me," said the mate.

"I'll go and turn in now. I'm dead tired," said the skipper. "I 'spose Joe and the boy's asleep."

George nodded and meditatively watched the other as he pushed back the fore-scuttle and drew it after him as he descended. Then a thought struck him, and he ran hastily forward and threw his weight on the scuttle just in time to frustrate the efforts of Joe and the boy, who were coming on deck for a little yelling space. The confusion below was frightful, the skipper's cry of "It's only me, Joe!" not possessing the soothing effect which he intended. They calmed down at length after their visitor had convinced them that he really was flesh and blood and fists, and the boy's attention being directed to a small rug in the corner of the foc'sle, the skipper took his bunk and was soon fast asleep.

He slept so soundly that the noise of the vessel getting under way failed to arouse him and she was well out in the open river when he awoke, and after cautiously protruding his head through the scuttle, ventured on deck. For some time he stood eagerly sniffing the cool, sweet air, and then after a look around gingerly approached the mate, who was at the helm. "Give me a hold on her," said he.

"You'd better get below ag'in if you don't want the missis to see you," said the mate. "She's gettin' up—nasty temper she's in, too."

The skipper went forward grumbling. "Send me down a good breakfast, George," said he.

To his great discomfort the mate suddenly gave a low whistle and regarded him with a look of blank dismay.

"Good gracious!" he cried, "I forgot all about it. Here's a pretty kettle of fish. Well, well!"

"Forgot about what?" asked the skipper uneasily.

"The crew take their meals in the cabin, now," replied the mate, "'cos the missis says it's more cheerful for 'em, and she's larnin' 'em to eat their wittles properly."

The skipper looked at him aghast. "You'll have to smuggle me up some grub," he said at length. "I'm not going to starve for nobody."

"Easier said than done," said the mate; "the missis has got eyes like needles. Still, I'll do the best I can for you. Look out, here she comes!"

The skipper fled hastily and, safe down below, explained to

the crew how they were to secrete portions of their breakfast for his benefit. The amount of explanation required for so simple a matter was remarkable, the crew manifesting a denseness which irritated him almost beyond endurance. They promised, however, to do the best they could for him and returned in triumph after a hearty meal and presented their enraged commander with a few greasy crumbs and the tail of a bloater.

For the next two days the wind was against them, and they made but little progress. Mrs. Harbolt spent most of her time on deck, thereby confining her husband to his evil-smelling quarters below. Matters were not improved for him by his treatment of the crew who, resenting his rough treatment of them, were doing their best to starve him into civility. Most of the time he kept in his bunk—or, rather, he kept in Jimmy's bunk—a prey to despondency and hunger of an acute type, venturing on deck only at night to prowl uneasily about and bemoan his condition.

On the third night Mrs. Harbolt was later in retiring than usual, and it was nearly midnight before the skipper, who had been indignantly waiting for her to go, was able to get on deck and hold counsel with the mate.

"I've done what I could for you," said the latter, fishing a crust from his pocket, which Harbolt took thankfully. "I've told her all the yarns I could think of, about people turning up after they was buried, and the like."

"What'd she say?" queried the skipper eagerly, between his bites.

"Told me not to talk like that," said the mate; "said it showed a want o' trust in Providence to hint at such things. Then I told her what you asked me about the locket, only I made it a bracelet worth £10."

"That pleased her?" suggested the other, hopefully.

The mate shook his head.

"She said I was a born fool to believe you'd been robbed o' it," he replied. "She said what you'd done was to give it to one o' them pore females. She's been going on frightful about it all the afternoon; won't talk o' nothing else."

"I don't know what's to be done," groaned the skipper despondently. "I shall be dead afore we get to port if this wind holds. Go down and get me something to eat, George; I'm starving."

"Everything's locked up, as I told you afore," said the mate.

"As the master of this ship," said the skipper, drawing himself up, "I order you to go down and get me something to eat. You can tell the missis it's for you, if she says anything."

"I'm hanged if I will," said the mate, sturdily. "Why don't you go down and have it out with her like a man. She can't eat you."

"I'm not going to," said the other, shortly. "I'm a determined man, and when I say a thing I mean it. It's going to be broke to her gradual, as I said. I don't want her to be scared, pore thing."

"I know who'd be scared the most," murmured the mate.

The skipper looked on him fiercely, and then sat down wearily on the hatches with his hands between his knees, rising after a time to get the dipper and drink copiously from the water cask, then replacing it with a sigh, he bade the mate a surly goodnight and went below.

To his dismay, he found when he awoke in the morning that what little wind there was had dropped in the night, and the billyboy was just rising and falling lazily on the water, in a fashion most objectionable to an empty stomach. It was the last straw, and he made things so uncomfortable below that the crew was glad to escape on deck, where they squatted down in the bows and proceeded to review a situation which was rapidly becoming unbearable.

"I've 'ad enough of it, Joe," grumbled the boy. "I'm sore all over with sleeping on the floor, and the old man's temper gets wuss. I'm going to be ill."

"Whaffor?" queried Joe, dully.

"You tell the missis I'm down below ill. Say you think I am dying," responded the infant Machiavelli, "then you'll see something if you keep your eyes open."

He went below again, not without a little nervousness, and, clambering into Joe's bunk, rolled on his back and gave a deep groan.

"What's the matter with you?" growled the skipper, who was lying in the other bunk, staving off the pangs of hunger with a pipe.

"I'm very ill—dying," said Jem, with another groan.

"You'd better stay in bed and have your breakfast brought down here, then," said the skipper, kindly.

"I don't want no breakfast," said Jem faintly.

"That's no reason why you shouldn't have it sent down, you

unfeeling little brute," said the skipper indignantly. "You tell Joe to bring you down a great plate of cold meat and pickles an' some coffee—that's what you want."

"All right, sir," said Jemmy. "I hope they won't let the missis come down here in case it's something catching. Better close the scuttle, sir."

"Eh?" said the skipper in alarm. "Certainly not. Here, you go up and die on deck—hurry up with you."

"I can't. I'm too weak," said Jemmy.

"You can go up on deck at once, d'ye hear me?" hissed the skipper in alarm.

"I c-c-c-can't help it," sobbed Jemmy, who was enjoying the situation amazingly. "I b'leeve it's sleeping on the hard floor's snapped something inside me."

"If you don't go I'll take you," said the skipper, and he was about to rise to put his threat into execution when a shadow fell across the opening, and a voice which thrilled him to the core said softly, "Jemmy."

"Yes'm," said Jemmy, languidly, as the skipper flattened himself in his bunk and drew the clothes over him.

"How do you feel?" inquired Mrs. Harbolt.

"Bad all over," said Jemmy. "Oh, don't come down, mum, please don't."

"Rubbish," said Mrs. Harbolt, tartly, as she came slowly and carefully down backward. "What a dark hole this is, Jemmy. No wonder you're ill. Put your tongue out."

Jemmy complied.

"I can't see properly here," replied the lady, "but it looks very large. S'pose you go in the other bunk, Jemmy. It's a good bit higher than this and you'd get more air and be more comfortable altogether."

"Joe wouldn't like it, mum," said the boy, anxiously. The last glimpse he had of the skipper's face did not make him yearn to share his bed with him.

"Stuff and nonsense," said Mrs. Harbolt, hotly. "Who's Joe, I'd like to know? But you come."

"I can't move, mum," said Jem, firmly.

"Nonsense," said the lady. "I'll just put it straight for you first, then in it you go."

"No, don't, mum," shouted Jem, now thoroughly alarmed at the success of the plot. "There's—there's a gentleman in that bunk. A gentleman we brought from London for a change of sea air."

"My goodness gracious!" ejaculated the surprised Mrs. Harbolt. "I never did—why, what's he had to eat?"

"He, he didn't want nothing to eat," said Jemmy, with a woful disregard for facts.

"What's the matter with him?" inquired Mrs. Harbolt, eying the bunk curiously. "What's his name? Who is he?"

"He's been lost a long time," said Jemmy, "and he's forgotten who he is. He's a oldish man with a red face an' a little white whiskers all around it—a very nice-looking man, I mean," he interposed hurriedly. "I don't think he's quite right in his mind, cos he says he ought to have been buried instead of some one else. Oh!"

The last word was almost a scream, for Mrs. Harbolt, staggering back, pinched him convulsively.

"Jemmy," she gasped, in a trembling voice, as she suddenly remembered certain mysterious hints thrown out by the mate. "Who is it?"

"The Captain," said Jemmy, and, breaking from her clasp, slipped from his bed and darted hastily on deck just as the pallid face of his commander broke through the blankets and beamed anxiously on his wife.

Five minutes later, as the crew, gathered aft, were curiously eying the foc'sle, Mrs. Harbolt and the skipper came on deck. To the astonishment of the redoubtable mate the eyes of the redoubtable woman were slightly wet, and she clung fondly to her husband as they walked slowly to the cabin, regardless of the presence of the men. Ere they went below, however, she called the grinning Jemmy to her, and, to his indignant grief and shame, tucked his head under her arm and publicly kissed him.



MY STEPMOTHER*

BY JAMES MORTIMER



Y story is not one of yesterday. It is a reminiscence of long ago—*Eheu ! fugaces labuntur anni !*—when I was a lad of eleven years. My father was a doctor, and we lived in an old-fashioned house in the Hampstead Road, where his consulting rooms and dispensary were also situated.

It was in July, and the school at which I was a day pupil—the institution would now probably be called an “academy for young gentlemen”—was on the point of breaking up for the autumn holidays. One day, during the morning recreation, I had a boyish dispute with a schoolfellow, whose true name was Joseph Cornish, but to whom we had given the nickname of “Ginger,” in consequence of the light carrot color of his hair.

Ginger was a morose, cross-grained boy, heartily disliked by the whole school for his hang-dog looks and sulky temper. I have forgotten the cause of my quarrel with him on the occasion to which I refer, but I remember that we speedily came to blows, and after a short, sharp tussle, I sent him sprawling on the ground, to the undisguised delight of the onlookers, who shouted “Bray-vo ! little Carboy ! Serve him right !” Ginger gathered himself up, shook his red mane, and scowled at me threateningly.

“Never mind, Carboy,” he snarled. “You have thrashed me, I own ; but it won’t be long before you get a bigger hiding yourself, mark that !”

“Not from you, you coward !” I retorted defiantly.

“Oh, no, not from me ; oh dear, no,” he sneered. “But from your stepmother. You’ll soon have one, Carboy, and then, my eye ! won’t you get thumped !”

“A stepmother ! I’m going to have a stepmother !” The bare idea of such a thing struck me as so exquisitely droll, that I burst into a fit of laughter.

* A selection from “The English Illustrated Magazine.”

"Oh, you laugh *now*," said Ginger disdainfully. "Wait a while, that's all! *You'll* see! Your father is going to get married again—I know what I'm talking about, I do! And then you'll have a stepmother, the same as me. *She'll* give you beans, like mine does me. What a jolly lark!" And his ugly, freckled face expanded into a fiendish grin which made him look, if possible, uglier than ever.

His jeers would infallibly have cost him another drubbing, but just at that moment the school-bell rang and frustrated my bellicose intentions.

I firmly made up my mind to think no more of Ginger's taunting words, but, in spite of all my efforts to blot this sneering prophesy from my memory, the dismal vision he had so malignantly conjured up still clung to me. Everywhere, sleeping or waking, at my lessons and in my leisure moments, at home or at school, that one horrible word, STEPMOTHER, was always before my eyes. At last, completely dominated by the grewsome spell, I found myself irresistibly impelled to write on my slate, on the fly-leaves of my books, on the white mantelpiece in my little room, inside the chest of carpenter's tools my godmother had given me for my last birthday, on the gummed medicine labels I furtively took from my father's surgery and stuck on disused blue bottles marked "Poison"—everywhere "STEP-MOTHER!"

Then, suddenly, as if to confirm the prognostication of the diabolical Ginger, I noticed certain occurrences, which appeared to my jaundiced observation alarmingly suspicious. For some days past an extraordinary and altogether unusual stir was going on under my good father's roof. In the first place, several rooms were now opened for the first time since my mother's death three years previously. Margaret, our faithful old servant, who had lived in my father's family long before his marriage, was plunged in a fever of excitement from morning till night. With her cap stuck on the side of her head she rushed up and down stairs twenty times a day, turning out cupboards, taking down curtains, pulling up carpets, cleaning wardrobes, polishing furniture, scolding everybody who crossed her path, and conducting herself generally like an elderly female in an advanced stage of mental aberration. In the midst of these strange portents the surgery boy, whose ears she boxed twice a day at least, and who had never before dared to offer the slightest objection, actually turned round and had the audacity to say,

"Lor! ain't I glad that *you* won't be my missus much longer!" I know he said it, because I heard him with my own ears.

I confess that all these mysterious events greatly increased my uneasiness.

"Oh, if it should be true!" I whispered to myself with a shudder.

"Oh, if father is really going to be so unkind, so cruel as to give his motherless little boy a stepmother!"

As a matter of fact, I had no experience of stepmothers—no recollection of ever having even seen one. But I had heard some shocking stories of their malevolent propensities, and though I had no personal acquaintance with Ginger's stepmother, the tremendous knobs and bumps that frequently ornamented his head, and which he assured the boys were her savage handiwork, were all the corroboration I required to convince me that small boys and stepmothers were much of the nature of oil and vinegar, and totally irreconcilable.

How well I remember one particularly restless night, during which I dreamed that I had a stepmother who inflicted hideous tortures upon my wretched anatomy, sometimes raising protuberances on my head with the aid of the most formidable pestle to be found in the surgery, and at others operating incisions in my little arms and legs with sharp knives and needle-pointed lancets, carefully selected for the purpose from my father's case of instruments, and threatening me with instant annihilation if I dared to complain to him of her inhuman barbarity. The next morning, weary and miserable, I trudged mournfully off to school, leaving my breakfast almost untasted, and as thoroughly convinced as a boy of eleven could be that life is a delusion and a snare, and that to be dead must be something quite soothing and delightful.

I was dragging my way slowly along the street in this dejected frame of mind, when suddenly I heard my father's name pronounced by one of two persons walking just in front of me.

"Yes," said the speaker, whom I at once recognized as our near neighbor, Mr. Burroughs, the solicitor. "Yes, it's settled, I understand; Dr. Carboy is going to marry a second wife."

Had I been suddenly struck by lightning I could not have been more paralyzed than I was for a moment by these appalling words. My heart stood still, I gasped for breath and clung to a railing near by, or I should have fallen prostrate. Fortunately, I was unobserved by Mr. Burroughs or his friend, who

walked on, continuing their gossip, of which I heard no more. But I had heard enough—more than enough. Ginger, then, the detested Ginger, had spoken the truth! My father was about to marry again and I should have a stepmother! Oh, now I must know the worst! Off I ran as fast as my trembling legs could carry me to consult my dearest and best friend, my good, kind godmother, who lived with her bachelor brother, a surgeon, in Harrington Square. To whom in all the wide world could I pour out my childish griefs if not to her, so loved, so tender, so trusted? She had been my mother's schoolmate, and, until the day the latter closed her eyes for ever, they were bound together in the most affectionate friendship. After my mother's death, all my dear godmother's love and solicitude were given to the orphan boy left to her devoted care. She was blind to my faults, and too often I know I took an unworthy advantage of her weakness and indulgence.

Hurrying to the old house in the square, with its vine-covered balconies, I ran down the area steps, and finding the kitchen door ajar I entered without knocking, and burst like a whirlwind into the little room where I felt sure of finding my godmother engaged at her morning's avocations. There she was, indeed, seated at the large French window opening into the garden, busily sewing. My sudden and abrupt appearance, pale and out of breath, gave her such a start that she dropped her work on the floor, whilst my friend Jingles, the cat, who had been peacefully dozing in the wicker easy-chair, gave a prodigious bound into the garden and made good his escape to the top of the arbor, his tail swollen to a prodigious size and elevated at an acute angle. At any other time I should have roared with laughter at Jingle's terrified gymnastics, but alas! I was not then precisely in the humor for merriment.

"Goodness gracious, Harry!" exclaimed my godmother, "how you frightened me!" Then observing my evident distress, she hastily added, "Why, Harry, what is the matter? Ah! I see! You have been a naughty boy again, and your master has punished you. Fie! Fie! you wicked child!"

"Oh, godmother!" I sobbed in broken accents, "you don't know how wretched I am!"

"Why, what has happened?" she asked quickly.

"Oh, godmother, they tell me papa is going to bring home a new wife. I shall have a stepmother, who will hate me and

beat me!" I burst into a flood of tears, and flinging myself on my knees, hid my burning face in her lap.

There was a moment's silence, and then she raised me in her arms, kissed my forehead and gently stroked my hair, as she had so often done when I was a little child. Wiping my tear-stained cheeks, she said softly,

"Who told you that, Harry?"

"Ginger said so—days ago," I replied, "when I fought him at school."

"How wrong," she interrupted, "to fight with your school companions. Besides, no doubt he only said it to tease you."

"Ah, but just now, in the street, I overheard our neighbor, Mr. Burroughs, talking about it, so I came at once to you, godmother, to ask if it is true. Oh, say it isn't true, godmother?"

"Listen to me, my dear," she said soothingly. "Have you confidence in my word?"

"Oh, yes, godmother. You, so good, so true."

"Well then," she continued, "dry your eyes, my darling; I promise you faithfully that you shall never, *never* have a stepmother."

Oh, the balm that these comforting words poured into my heart! She spoke so quietly, yet so firmly, that I believed her on the instant, and left her quite reassured and perfectly happy. I kissed her affectionately and ran off to school with a smiling face, and from that moment my trouble left me, like some hideous nightmare that fades away with the light of returning day.

Soon after this came our annual examinations, the distribution of prizes, and the breaking up of school for the long autumn vacation. That same evening my father sent for me to the surgery, and informed me, with a benevolent smile, that he was so pleased with the progress I was making, and felt so proud of the nice prizes which had been awarded to his boy, that he had decided to accept the kind invitation of a brother doctor, practising at Worthing, to let me spend a month of my holidays at the seaside. I need hardly say that I received this delightful announcement with boyish enthusiasm. I hugged my father with boisterous gratitude, and I verily believe that in the exuberance of my glee I would have even shaken hands with Ginger, had I chanced to meet that uncongenial youth in any secluded back street in the parish of St. Pancras, where my condescension would be likely to pass unobserved by the world in general.

And what a grand month it was, and how swiftly it melted away, in the pretty little town by the seashore, with its pebbly beach and its boating and its picturesque excursions, and its trips to Shoreham and Brighton, and even to Lewes and Eastbourne, when the Worthing doctor's amiable wife visited her friends in those places and kindly took me with her. It was like an enchanting dream, and, like such dreams, it ended all too soon.

Towards the close of August I bade good-by to my hospitable Worthing hosts, and in a few hours I found myself again in stuffy, smoky old London, where Margaret met me at the station and was good enough to express her complete approval of the change in my physical appearance, effected by a month's exposure to the health-giving air of the sea. And—eh?—oh yes! father was well—very well indeed. Oh, of course! godmother was also quite well. Had she inquired about me? How I was enjoying my holidays? Oh, yes, certainly! When had Margaret seen her? Humph! That very morning. She had been away for—ahem!—a change, but had now returned and would be pleased to see me again, no doubt.

Margaret was never at any time a particularly loquacious person, and these few items were all I could extract from her during our ride in a rickety cab from London Bridge to the Hampstead Road. And here, on our arrival at my father's door, a genuine surprise awaited me. Could it be possible? Was this coquetish-looking mansion, bright and shining from top to bottom in all the glory of cream-colored paint—was *this* the dingy old house where I was born and had spent all my life? I looked at Margaret in mute amazement.

Ah, yes; the doctor had thought it a good time to have the place tidied up a bit. Yes, to be sure! It had been painted and repaired while I was away. The smell of the new paint was all gone now, and she didn't think I should notice anything disagreeable.

And when Dick, the surgery boy, opened the door and greeted me with a broad but silent grin—Dick, on whose stolid features I had never before seen the faintest vestige of a smile—my surprises had only just commenced. Everything seemed to be spick and span new—new carpets, new furniture, new paper-hangings, and, most wonderful of all, flowers in the vases on the drawing-room mantelpiece and on the dining-room table. When I reached my own little room, once so dull and cheerless, I found that during

my absence it had not been forgotten in the general transformation scene. It was ten times brighter, lighter, and prettier altogether, with *such* a beautiful blue-tinted paper on the walls, snow-white curtains at the window, and, just fitting into the niche near the fireplace, the very identical walnut bookcase for which I had longed, filled with the books I had dreamed of possessing when I grew up and became a millionaire. It all looked as if some beneficent fairy had accomplished these wonders by stamping her tiny foot and waving her magic wand around her head as she ordered it all to be done instantly.

Margaret, who had left me for a moment in rapturous contemplation of the good fairy's work, now returned and recalled me back to earth by announcing in a solemn tone, such as I had never before heard her assume, that the doctor desired to speak to me in the library. A little dashed by Margaret's serious, not to say sepulchral, delivery of my father's message, I obeyed the parental summons, my heart filled with vague apprehensions. But a glance at his kind face, now beaming with happiness, at once proved to me that my fears were without foundation. He took both my hands in his, kissed me affectionately, and expressed his pleasure at seeing me looking so greatly improved in health.

"It's the sea air, my boy," he said, "entirely the sea air. It beats all the physic in the world—don't forget that." After a moment's pause he added, "Of course, Harry, you have noticed the changes which have taken place while you were away? Well, there has been one change which you have not yet seen, and I want you to hear of it first from me. During your absence I have brought home a second mother for you. Hereafter there will be two of us to love and watch over you."

As these words fell from my father's lips a cold shiver ran through me and my heart seemed to cease beating, as though suddenly paralyzed. My knees shook under me, and it was only by an immense effort that I prevented myself from falling to the floor. Without appearing to notice the effect his terrible disclosure had produced upon me my father gravely resumed:

"At your age, my dear Harry, it is well that a child should enjoy the advantage of a mother's care and affection, and I have every reason to hope," he added, with an encouraging smile, "that you and your new mamma will be the best of friends."

A mortal pallor overspread my face, and I listened with quivering lips, offering no syllable in reply. For a moment my father

seemed to fade from my sight, and in his place rose the hateful vision of Ginger, tauntingly repeating the words, "Ha! I told you so! You see it was the truth. You've got a stepmother, and she will beat you. Ha! Ha! Ha! Hurra!"

My father's voice roused me once more to myself.

"Well, Harry," he asked, "have you nothing to say? Surely you are anxious to see your new mother and kiss her?"

I muttered some unintelligible answer, but the words seemed to stick in my throat. Taking me by the hand my father led the way to the little sitting-room where, as a child, I had learned the alphabet at my own poor dead mother's knee. Instinctively, as the door opened I shrank back, expecting to see myself in the presence of a tall, bony woman of forbidding aspect and harsh voice, whose smile of welcome would remind me of the hyena's affable greeting. I felt even before I saw her that I hated her with all the intensity born of fear and consternation. But I wouldn't let *her* see that I trembled in her loathsome presence! No—I would be brave—I would defy her to——

"My love," said my father to the tall, bony woman of forbidding aspect whom I had not yet seen, "here is Harry."

"My darling!" murmured a soft voice.

I looked up hastily. It was my godmother! With one bound I was in her arms, clasped to her loving heart.

"My own dear, dear boy! My son!" she said, covering my face with kisses.

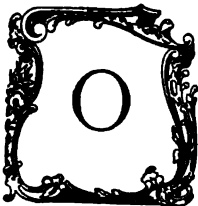
My son! All at once the light broke in upon me. Ah yes! It was indeed she, my adored godmother, who was now to be always what she had long been, my second mother. I returned her caresses with a heart overflowing with love and joy. My father looked on silently, smiling approval.

"You see, dear," said my godmother, gently stroking my hair, "I told you the truth when I promised you that morning you should never, *never* have a stepmother."



ON GUARD AT LA BELLE-ÉPINE*

BY RICHARD O'MONROY



H! how bored I was that day!

It was during the second siege of Paris, and I had been placed with my squadron on guard at La Belle-Épine, six miles from Notre-Dame.

Poor Belle-Épine! Such a charming inn as it had been once upon a time—gay, noisy, lively, full of travellers, postillions, and pretty maid-servants.

Louis the Fifteenth went there with Madame de Pompadour, and planted the tree which served as the inn's sign. Since then many other lovers had written their names on its bark, while they drank the little wine of the country in its shade.

Then one day silence had suddenly succeeded to noise, travellers and postillions had ceased coming, and the pretty maid-servants themselves had fled away, leaving the inn empty and deserted.

The Prussians were coming.

These latter had, of course, burnt up the doors and the furniture, broken the windows, stolen the old kitchen clock, and smashed in the roof. On the day on which we encamped there, there remained of La Belle-Épine only some blackened walls, behind which one could just find shelter from the shells which the Commune was sending out from Villejuif and Hautes-Bruyères.

Before us the road to Italy stretched out indefinitely, white, dusty, flooded with sunlight. The orders were to let no one from Paris pass, and they were easy to carry out. Not a cart, not a man, not a dog broke the gloom of the landscape. Now and then a little white cloud rose above the paving-stones. On looking closer you saw that it was another projectile that had just burst. Only the day before we had had wonderful luck; a woman selling potatoes had tried to pass with her cart; as she appeared to be a suspicious character, she was ordered to turn

* Translated by S. St. G. Lawrence, from the French, for Short Stories.
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back. She refused, and, in short, was arrested and sent to the General. This important event had certainly occupied fifteen minutes, and it was anyhow a distraction; but to-day no woman selling potatoes appeared on the horizon.

And my companions were in a dreadful temper. The Captain had just learned that the trousers that had accompanied him through the entire campaign of the Army of the Loire were not eternal, and showed their age by a large opening in the portion which touches the saddle. It was I who had timidly pointed this out to him, and I greatly feared the consequences of my perspicuity. The Lieutenant, who had expected to be married early in the Spring, was wondering whether the powers that be intended to keep him a bachelor much longer, and also overwhelm him with colds in the head, due to sleeping in the open air. To amuse himself, he was whistling a little air between his teeth, very much out of tune. There was also a second lieutenant, but he never said a word; he contented himself with smoking, and with blowing great clouds from his pipe at even intervals. Did he think about anything?—I don't know, but this mute smoking gave him an appearance of great profundity. If you spoke to him, he fixed you with a round impassive eye. You thought he was about to answer,—two or three puffs of smoke issued from his mouth, and that was all,—he gravely continued to smoke.

These were the agreeable persons with whom the Commune forced me to spend my existence. On my way home from Germany, where I had been a prisoner for five months, I had, all through the journey, dreamed of Paris as one dreams of the promised land, and I had barely arrived when I was obliged to fight against the city which epitomized all the memories and all the joys of my youth. My thoughts were becoming gloomy. I reflected that I was ridiculous, and to cheer me up I went and tried to read the German verses written on the tombstone of a Prussian officer killed at Chevilly and buried behind the inn. I had already deciphered the first line: *Ade, liebe Bruder*, "Farewell, beloved brother," when I was interrupted in my task by my three companions' cries of astonishment.

There was a black dot on the horizon towards Paris, a large black dot, advancing tranquilly through the little white clouds I have mentioned. We got an opera-glass; we passed it from eye to eye, and we soon unanimously decided that it was a vehicle, and actually a furniture truck! Who could the individual be

who was sufficiently original to drive out in a furniture truck under the rain of bombs and shells which inundated the road? The moment was certainly ill-chosen for such a journey. Once a projectile fell so close to the truck that we expected to see it pull up. It did not, however, but continued to approach.

When it got within a few steps of us the Captain, who had always declared that nothing could startle him, was unable to suppress a gesture of astonishment. In the front of the truck, seated on a red satin sofa and wrapped in a camel's-hair shawl, was a remarkably beautiful woman. She was fair, and pink, and smiling, and her large, blue eyes showed not the slightest emotion. Behind her were piled together pell-mell silk curtains, buhl cabinets inlaid with mother-of-pearl, rosewood tables, looking-glasses, bronzes, and all sorts of expensive furniture. A Japanese vase held a great, green plant, which waved its leaves over her head to protect her from the sun; and amid this confusion, with her calm face, she looked like a princess in a Chinese palace.

A man in a blouse was leading the horses by the bridle. He was covered with dirt from the shells, and his pallor contrasted with the placidity of the woman he was escorting.

When she reached us she gave the order to stop, and then bowed very prettily to the Captain.

"Good morning, Captain. I'm very glad to be among Christians at last. I'm like the snail, you see: I travel with my house on my back—through the bombs."

And she burst out laughing.

She was really charming, and I should never have guessed that so much pluck could be hidden under such a delicate exterior.

The Captain instinctively drew together the divorced portions of his trousers, and forced them to live together for the time being, then, reassured as to his prestige, he put on his most formidable voice, and with the pose of a gendarme examining a legal document, asked: "Where do you come from? Where are you going?"

"Why, I come from Paris. It is no fun there any more! If you could see the boulevards! it's really sad; all my friends are gone and the theatres are all closed. The Communist staff-officers are the swells just now, and they are *so* dirty! Such caps, such beards, such faces, it's ridiculous. If I had had to stay among that lot, I should have died. I have a little box of

a house at Longjumeau, a regular little nest. Not very big, you know, but very pretty, and I am going there to wait for better days."

"There is only one obstacle to this plan, madam, which is, that I shall not allow you to pass."

She looked at the Captain in astonishment. Probably no man had ever dared to speak to her in such a tone before, and not understanding such a rough injunction, she looked about to see whether help was possibly to be found among the rest of us.

The Lieutenant looked at her indifferently, unenthusiastically, as one whose mind and thoughts were elsewhere. He was no ally.

Behind him was the Second Lieutenant; he was smoking with his usual impassiveness. Neither did his large, round eyes give promise of help.

I was in the background—and I admit that I was looking at her with all my eyes. I don't know whether she noticed this, but she raised her voice:

"What, you won't let me pass? Do you know that you are extremely impertinent, sir? Are you going to be as rude as the Communist commanding La Porte d'Italie?—a person whom I would not let into my stable for fear of soiling it, and who forced me to parley with him for half-an-hour. I was obliged to be polite and make the gentleman's conquest, and I finally tamed him so thoroughly that he insisted on treating me to a glass of horrible currant brandy."

"How disgusting!"

"Come! I am sure *you* are going to let me off cheaper!"

And she gave him a glance which would have softened a tiger.

The Captain never flinched, but replied: "Madam, when the orders are that no one is to pass, no one passes. If Madam Thiers herself was to appear, I should turn her back."

I am convinced that he was thinking of the advertising woodcut, in the shops, of *La Redingote Grise*, which represents a conscript stopping Napoleon, and telling him he couldn't pass if he were the Little Corporal himself.

She looked at me again. This time I made a heroic resolve, and burned my bridges behind me. Time was precious and I had to force the situation. I came forward and pretended to suddenly recognize her.

"What! is that you? *you* here?" and climbing into the

truck I fell into her arms and kissed her vigorously. How willingly I acted my comedy, and how natural I must have been in the part! She screamed, but I whispered: "Silence, and you'll get through."

You may imagine that a brave little woman who was not afraid of bursting shells was not going to faint because an officer of dragoons, whom she had never laid eyes on before, kissed her without warning. So she threw herself bravely into the part, and I felt two soft arms about my neck, while her lips touched my forehead.

I turned to the Captain, slightly upset.

"I have known this lady for years, and I can answer for her as for myself. I trust, Captain, that you will now allow her to pass, and will even give her an escort of ten dragoons. This will allow her to reach Longjumeau without further trouble, and will afford you, in addition, a means of verifying her identity."

The Captain, after much persuasion, agreed, and I feared for a moment that, for greater security, he intended to accompany the ten dragoons himself. Luckily, I reminded him in time that his trousers had been with the Army of the Loire. The Lieutenant would have been unwilling to compromise himself by appearing in company with such a good-looking person; the Second Lieutenant would have been obliged to stop smoking, which would have vexed him greatly; in short, the command of the escort was left to me.

I placed five dragoons in front of the truck and five behind, and I set forth in triumph with my prisoner.

She is snatching away my pen, and declaring that the rest of the story does not concern the public. And after all, she is perhaps right, for it is already ancient history.





BRONSON GRANBY owned little but his name. His coat was threadbare; his hat could scarcely hold its own; those portions of his scanty linen visible at wrists and throat were so frayed and torn that the clipping treatment bade fair to prove annihilation; and of his boots so little individuality remained one might well scoff at the popular fallacy, that to those who wore shoes it was as if the whole earth were covered with leather. In truth, despite their outward respectability, only the shadows of soles intervened between his weary feet and the rough road he travelled; the leather was a thing of the past.

Tall and gaunt was Bronson Granby; he held himself painfully erect, as if fearful that the slightest relaxation would prove his undoing. His gray hair, worn a trifle long, was brushed back from his broad forehead, and to a physiognomist the strongly marked face, with its deep-set, piercing eyes, was one never to be forgotten.

Of course he had a history—every one has for the matter of that, but Bronson Granby had never quite finished his initial chapter. He had, from his precocious childhood, a most inventive mind, which only a solid education and strict discipline could transform into practical usefulness. This, however, was not his portion, and the great schemes by which as he fondly imagined the thinking world would be swayed, proved as delusive as Fortune herself, who smiled upon him from afar, but vanished as he drew near, and so, as one finds only too often in such cases, his Pegasus turned out but a miserable hobby-horse, which he rode with dogged persistence, though it only rocked backward and forward, and never moved one single step ahead.

"But a few hundreds in my hand," he would say, with an ex-

pressive motion of the long, thin, nervous member, "and I might make a million—more or less."

Alas! it was always less, for the hundreds had been squandered, and at fifty—worn, emaciated, an old man in the very prime of life—he still waited, with the same impatience of thirty years ago the granting of his first patent. He had either been too far ahead of the times, or too late in filing his application; or, what is still more probable, his mechanical appliances never fairly illustrated his broad conceptions, but the fact remained, and this man, who was, as it were, the fountain-head of so many brilliant possibilities that died at their birth, hovered about the sacred precincts of the Patent Office, striving in vain for that spell, the "open sesame," without which he could never enter the wonder-world of fame.

He was well-known, and regarded by those who watched him come and go with unfailing regularity as somewhat of a crank. But still undaunted by repeated failure he lingered in Washington year after year, held there, doubtless, by some vague, dim hope of better things. He managed somehow to pick up a scanty living, crumbs dropped by busy officials, a scrap of writing, an odd job here and there, anything to turn an honest penny was not beneath Bronson Granby. And in the meantime there was *The Invention*, the culmination of all his best endeavors and high aims. There it was, tested and approved by competent judges, awaiting recognition!

One evening, about dark, when March was at its windiest, the Inventor, wrapped in an old army cloak, that, like himself, had seen better days, issued forth to brave the elements. It was raining a fine unpleasant drizzle, which the blast caught up and turned into sleet, that came driving against the venturesome wayfarer, but though Bronson Granby's slight figure swayed like a reed in the hurricane which met him at every crossing, he struggled on with unabated energy, until finally he stood before a massive-looking dwelling, situated a little beyond the fashionable limits of the city, yet distinguished by a certain air of dignity and repose, as if it had descended from father to son for many generations. He steadied himself for a moment against an iron railing which inclosed the mansion; then he mounted the broad steps and rang the bell.

"Yes, Mr. Curtis was at home, and had ordered that the gentleman be shown to the library at once." The stately footman eyed "the gentleman" doubtfully, but Granby's manner

repelled impertinent curiosity, so he led the way in silence, and opened the library door with that gentle flourish peculiar to his calling.

In the subdued light shed by the soft glow of a lamp, the Inventor saw a gentleman seated at a large table, busily engaged in writing. He looked up as Granby entered, and their eyes met in cold recognition.

"You sent for me," said Granby in a low voice.

"I did," replied the other composedly, "though I hardly expected so speedy a compliance with my request. It is long since we met, twenty-five years at the very least. You are changed, Bronson."

"Yes; time has dealt more gently with you." Bronson spoke with repressed bitterness as he glanced at the unlined face with its clear-cut features.

"You forget this," and Curtis smiled as he passed his hand lightly over his silvery hair. The graceful gesture irritated his visitor, who moved impatiently.

"You must be tired," said Gordon Curtis; "pray take that easy-chair. I trust you have not come on foot this awful night."

"It was scarcely dark when I left the place I call home," answered Granby, sinking with real exhaustion into the proffered chair. "The distance is great, but I walk in all seasons and in all weather."

"Shall I ring for wine?" His voice expressed only the coldest courtesy.

"Thank you—no," said Bronson Granby hastily. "You sent for me," he reiterated. "In what way can I serve you?"

"Serve me!" Curtis allowed the full inflection of sarcasm to dwell in the echo. "I rather thought to serve *you*."

"It is the same thing," retorted the other.

"I have heard of your latest invention," pursued Curtis imperturbably, "and being, in my poor way, ranked among men of science, I thought my opinion might be of value to you." He paused for some acknowledgment, but none came. "Have you the instrument with you?" he questioned.

"Your note expressed a desire to see it," said the Inventor in his direct way. "I have it with me in consequence."

He drew from beneath his cloak a box of medium size and placed it on the table.

"And all your life, your energy, your privation and your pov-

erty are compressed in those dimensions," observed his host with a shade of contempt upon his handsome face.

"Say, rather, my ambition, Gordon Curtis, which rises above such sordid considerations."

"True; but I doubt if your ambition has accomplished the ascendancy you boast of. I mean no taunt, Bronson. I am only moralizing on the different roads we travel. I fancy I have been more prudent than you, as the world takes it. I am a philosopher in my way, dealing with life's most complex problems—on paper. I invent, too, in a manner. I fashion theories with my pen, and they have brought me golden harvests. I cannot always practice what I preach—what matter! I do not set myself upon a pedestal—I merely expound natural and moral laws to the public as I would interpret them to myself if I had time to live again. Doubtless you have read my article on High and Low Pressure? No! I will give you a copy, and now I will examine your invention if you will kindly show it to me."

Granby winced under the patronizing tone, but without a word he proceeded to expose his treasure to the Philosopher's critical gaze.

There was little to be seen. A copper sphere about the size of a toy balloon was prolonged at either pole into a hollow tube a yard long and half an inch in diameter. To one end was attached a metal top, which opened and shut according to the regulations of an ingenious contrivance at the other extremity—a diminutive engine worked by a small electric battery. The whole apparatus occupied but an insignificant space on the table—yet it was perfect in every detail, and Curtis, as he sat coolly watching both the inventor and the invention, acknowledged this, even while he wondered how those nervous, trembling fingers could be trained to such nicety and precision. He was still more surprised to see Bronson Granby suddenly throw off his gloom and begin to speak with eager enthusiasm.

"The plan is very simple. The object, as you know, is to temper the atmosphere, for which purpose let us suppose that we need the instrument to reduce the temperature in an overheated room. Well, then our first care is to indicate upon the meter you see here the number of degrees we wish. Fifteen below freezing is the limit of my experiments, though I believe it could stand a much stronger test, and also, by reversing the action of the engine, which requires the opening of another valve, a room of low

temperature could be heated to an indefinite number of degrees. Of course, my delineation is rough. Materials of the proper sort are expensive, and I have been forced to construct my engine of inferior metal and in the face of a thousand drawbacks."

"You have done fairly well, I think." The Philosopher spoke in a ruminative way, with his eyes fixed upon the instrument and his brows drawn together in deep thought, "yet I firmly believe, if you would follow my suggestion, your invention would be more than useful. It would be invaluable. I am, as I said before, a man of theories. I can explain the process of improvement in your design, though the mechanical appliance of the principle is far beyond me. For this reason I sent for you. I know that your pride, or rather resentment, which has estranged us for a quarter of a century, could be broken only through an appeal to your dearest ambition. I am thus frank with you because in seeking your aid in the project I have in view, I want to be sure that something more than pecuniary interest binds us."

Curtis looked straight at his visitor, but despite his seeming unreserve, Granby felt that something was hidden, and he resented the calm dissecting glance of those cold gray eyes.

"I cannot quite fathom your motive," he said with real dignity in voice and manner, "nor what you wish of me; but understand once for all, I will be led into nothing blindfolded. I can justly measure your influence over me, yet I warn you not to go too far. It has been my destiny to play the puppet in more than one of your schemes, but remember, you may bend my spirit to your will, you cannot break it; there is a point at which it rebounds."

"My dear Bronson," observed Curtis, with just that faint shade of sarcasm he could so well assume, "does it not occur to you that you are raising a tempest in a teapot? But you were always impetuous, and I see your solitary life has not curbed the natural impatience of your disposition. You should have married, as I did."

Again Granby shrank beneath the covert taunt his words conveyed. "I am not one to break any woman's heart. I loved only once and faithfully."

Whatever sting may have lurked in his retort the Philosopher might have been incased in glass for all the impression that it seemed to make. A strange gleam flashed in his eyes, but it was gone directly, and Curtis, leaning back in his easy-chair, evinced no slightest trace of emotion.

"There!" he exclaimed soothingly, as if humoring a wayward

child. "I have roused unpleasant associations—forgive me, and now let us be strictly practical. I have heard your invention favorably discussed by men of science. I approve of it highly. As you say, it is crude, but possessed of capabilities far above what has hitherto been within the range of human power—further than even you have conceived. Your design performs a wonderful task in thus administering to Nature, holding her pulse, keeping an accurate index of her respiration, but why do you stop here? Why pause half way, when you might transcend the highest flight of true philanthropy? You have probed to Nature's heart. Have you ever considered how much more accessible are Nature's children—plants, animals, human beings—and how you might regulate their inward temperature through a diminished reproduction of your instrument?"

Granby had listened attentively. His flushed and animated countenance looked positively handsome as this vision of fame and glory was subtly spread before him. New worlds to conquer still cried out to him despite the record of lost battles.

"I see," he cried eagerly. "You wish me to try my experiment in your province—mankind. How and for what reason I am as yet ignorant. I cannot work in the dark."

"Nor do I wish it. You interpret my object correctly. I have spent much time in studying the complex passions that sway my kind, and have come to the conclusion that if the animal force within us—heat you might call it, or cold, as the case may be—were tempered by intellectual force from without, fine and delicate, yet powerful enough to penetrate the human fabric and work its way to the recesses of the mind and soul, the most astounding results would be produced."

Granby followed every word with kindling enthusiasm. The Man was completely submerged in the Inventor, whose active brain had already fashioned the outlines of a noble work, and as Curtis stopped to note the effect of his plausible argument, he was startled at the energy and vivacity which swept away a dozen years from the stooping shoulders.

"Only give me time," he cried, "and I may yet be famous."

"And rich," added the Philosopher.

"Gordon Curtis, am I so despicable as to think of money at this crisis?"

"Yet it is useful," said Curtis musingly, "in its base way, of course. I have found it so." He glanced at his luxurious surroundings and leisurely produced his check-book from a drawer

in the table. "How much will you need for the furtherance of this scheme, Bronson?"

"I want no aid from you," said Granby irritably, though his hungry eyes followed his host's every movement.

"Nonsense!" answered the other, dipping his pen in the ink. "You cannot work with air, and I have my own reasons for desiring the success of your invention. I wish to use it—to prove its worth, to give it a place in scientific history, and you the fame you sigh for, and the wealth you so despise. What will cover your needs?"

"Are you trying to bribe me by a pen-stroke?"

"No, only through your ambition that is vulnerable, Bronson. I hold you above all meaner motive."

"You but do me justice," said the Inventor with a touch of bitterness; "would to Heaven I could resist you; but you know your power."

Curtis filled out the blank and pushed it across the table. "Understand," he said, slowly, "I am not buying you, either body or soul. I am earnest in my desire to add another gem to science's store—another item to my psychological experience. You are the only being who can assist me, and you must do so untrammelled by any feeling of obligation. I have your address and will drop in upon you as your work progresses, and now," he added, touching a bell, "we will say good-night. You are tired, ride home; spare yourself physically, for your mental powers must not be overtaxed. Tompkins, show the gentleman out."

In a dazed, unsteady fashion, Bronson Granby followed his guide; the vista so suddenly opened to him was vast and overwhelming. Absorbed in contemplation, he took little heed of the elegance and luxury which characterized every nook and corner of the fine old mansion; but as he passed the drawing-room the sound of voices arrested his attention. The door was open, and in the brilliant glow of many lights, so different from the shaded seclusion of the library, the two occupants were plainly to be seen; a man and woman, both young and handsome, and—from their low and earnest converse, the murmur of which reached Granby as he paused half-unconsciously on the threshold—both in love. The girl was beautiful, but the Inventor's eyes only rested on her lightly for an instant, and then were riveted on the face of him who sat beside her. He grew pale as he looked and leaned against the door, as if its sup-

port were necessary. The butler roused him by a touch on his arm.

"Are you ready, sir—shall I help you with your cloak?"

"Ready? yes. Thank you—I need no help."

With a sigh he straightened himself to his full height—drew his old cloak closely around him, grasped his treasure firmly, and the next moment found him, an alien from the warmth and light, as he had ever been, buffeting with the rude elements on his way towards a car whose bells jingled in the distance.

It was some days before Bronson Granby could sufficiently calm his excited fancy for the earnest work he had in view. He felt that the effort he was about to make would overtop the highest pinnacle of human conception; that it would tax all his reserve force, both mental and physical, and before he bent himself to his labor, he resolved, let fortune serve him how she would, that his crowning invention should be his last. His feeble frame, lacking the vitality of youth, would be unable to endure much longer such continual nervous pressure. Should success come to him at this late day, the remainder of his life would be passed in peaceful tranquillity; if failure were again his portion, he had a presentiment that the tense cords of his being would snap assunder, and the rest he craved would be his forever.

With these thoughts, the Inventor applied himself heart and soul to a thorough investigation of the subject with which he had to deal—the tempering of human passions by the subtle mechanism of human skill; the regulation of the blood as it surges through the veins, affecting both head and heart. The heating or cooling of the emotions, that was to be his aim, and what force so powerful as electricity to accomplish his purpose? A miniature of his invention was in some sort the instrument he required, but of workmanship so fine and delicate as to be compressed in the smallest possible space, and the greatest patience was needful to perfect each microscopic detail. He had the very best of materials at his disposal, and his artistic sense was stirred as the dainty little machine developed under his magic touch. His enthusiasm once kindled, he gave no thought to Curtis's motive in thus stimulating his ambition; he lived only in the great work, and he cared little what happened beyond his closed door, so long as he was left in peace.

It was not until the Philosopher himself knocked at the forbidden portal, that Granby became sufficiently alive to outside

influences to answer the peremptory summons, and as he stood for a moment inhospitably barring the way to his sanctum, Curtis noticed how wan he looked in the broad daylight, and how attenuated was his ordinarily spare figure; all the buoyancy of life seemed concentrated in his unusually brilliant eye and the lines about his sensitive mouth, and withal a certain new dignity born of intellectual triumph, which caused him to stand forth from out the shadows of his poor surroundings.

The Philosopher felt this as he peered curiously around the bare apartment to which Granby reluctantly admitted him, but his observant glance travelled without delay to the farther end of the room, where stood the Inventor's work-table.

Instinctively both men moved towards it and faced each other, the table between them, still in unbroken silence, for the moment was a crisis not lightly to be passed over. Here, however, the Inventor was a monarch in his own realm, maintaining his supremacy by the very power of his gift, while the Philosopher, forgetful of his rôle, was pale and agitated, as befitted one athirst for some passionate desire.

"Time presses," he said at length, forcing his voice to calmness; "is your work completed?"

"Yes."

"Has it been tested?"

"Only upon myself. I have opened the heat-valve and found its effect wonderfully exhilarating after extraordinary mental energy."

"Is it thoroughly safe?"

"What do you mean by 'safe'?" was Granby's counter-question.

"I wish to know if it will act upon the subject mentally and morally without physical detriment."

"It is hard to tell; the very laws of nature make these forces dependent on one another to a certain extent. That I should say is regulated by the disposition; yours for instance——"

"Being cold," interposed Curtis.

The Inventor shook his head. "You are not cold; the phlegm in your nature is only a thick super-stratum; the fire beneath is all the more dangerous because smothered. I know you, Gordon Curtis, better than you know yourself."

"You think so, at all events; but that is not the question. Would a high pressure affect me inconveniently? Do not choose your words, Bronson—regard me impersonally."

"Then candidly—no; a gentler and more pliable nature would feel more keenly the power of such delicate mechanism."

"That is the kind with which we have to deal. May I examine your instrument?"

There was a marked deference in his tone, though his gray eyes looked black under the influence, probably, of that smothered fire to which Granby referred.

The Inventor detached an old-fashioned locket from his watch-chain and opening it exhibited the tiny marvel of his skill coiled up within that limited compass.

"Bronson, you are a genius!" exclaimed the Philosopher in a burst of admiration.

"The world does not agree with you," said the other with a sigh.

"But it shall. This shall make you famous—if it only possesses the power you say it does—if it accomplishes my purpose."

"What is your purpose?" asked the Inventor sharply.

"To-morrow you shall know. Come with this triumph of yours to my house and we will test it together."

"To-morrow!" echoed Granby; "there is always a 'to-morrow' in my life that never dawns. Why not to-day—to-night?"

"Why not, indeed! Come then—delays are dangerous—let us go at once."

So they passed out into the dusky streets, where lights were just beginning to twinkle. Curtis led the way and his companion followed unresistingly. They paused before a jeweler's shop.

"Help me to purchase a suitable casket for such a gem as yours," said the philosopher, and Granby found himself looking over a medley of beautiful ornaments.

A locket of exquisite workmanship was at length selected.

"A present for a lady," explained Curtis, in a meaning tone, to Granby as they left the place, and no further word was spoken until they were once more sitting in the shadow of the philosopher's library.

Then Granby broke forth:

"So it is a woman on whom you would practice! I tell you, Curtis, once for all, perfect candor regarding your scheme is what I demand, before I subvert my highest endeavor to your pleasure."

"You shall have it," returned the other, quietly. "The lady is my daughter. I am fond of her in my way—understand that. She is useful to me as an ornament to my home—as mistress of my household; but she has her mother's nature—weak, impressionable—and she loves. That is not well; both you and I have learned the folly of it. Now, from a metaphysical standpoint, I see but one way out of the evil—the cooling of her too ardent spirit by the use of your instrument, without jeopardizing my personal comfort or her happiness and well-being."

"Is that all?"

"You shall see for yourself. Come."

He lifted a heavy portière and led his visitor through an unfrequented passage toward a brilliantly-lighted conservatory, and presently they stood in a fairyland of exotics overlooking the splendid drawing-room, which Granby had seen once before. The Philosopher silently pointed beyond. An instant's glance sufficed. Bronson Granby turned fiercely on his tempter and held his arm in such a vice-like grasp that Curtis winced and grew pale.

"Villain!"—he spoke almost in a whisper, but Curtis looked fearfully around, as if the very flowers heard.

"That man—who is he?"

"It seems that you know."

"Her son—can you not allow the dead to rest?"

"She lives in him—he must be made to feel the sting that has embittered my life. You suffered, too—can you forget?"

"I loved her," murmured Granby, as if to himself.

"And she was false to both—cruelly false. Can you forget that?"

"I loved her," repeated Granby dreamily.

The Philosopher suddenly cast away his restraint. "Look there, Bronson! See her hands in his so trustingly! It maddens me. See him bending towards her! Great heaven! can you stand idle while he wins his happiness so easily?"

"He is like her—the very look and smile. He has her eyes," said Granby softly.

"Aye! so you can trace the resemblance? Come, Bronson, revive your bitter enmity to me. You would not have *her* son marry *my* daughter! You possess the remedy; use it."

Again Bronson Granby opened his locket. This time he took out the little instrument and looked at it curiously.

"It is through her that you would hurt him—through your

undying hatred towards the woman who lies in her grave that you would wreak your vengeance on two innocent beings."

"But you have assured me that my daughter will escape unharmed."

"Only with the best part of her life destroyed—the chill of that wonderful capacity for loving, which is a woman's kingdom."

"But the man, Bronson, and the help you promised! Consider what rests upon this moment—your reputation, honor, fame, wealth, everything that could tempt a man. Do not fling them away for a sentiment."

"And I hold so much in my grasp?" questioned Granby. "Then, if what you say be true, what will become of them—of him?"

"Do you imagine that I care? I would indeed be more than human."

"As you are less now. Look well, Gordon Curtis. I hold—as you say—subject to my will, fame, wealth, honor, and a subtle power over two souls—a voice in their destiny, and see! I shatter it all in the hand that created it."

He closed his fingers firmly as he spoke, and before Curtis could interpose by word or sign, the tiny thing lay a shapeless mass in the Inventor's outstretched palm.

For a moment their eyes met in one deep, penetrating gaze.

"Let me pass," said the Inventor coldly, and Curtis shrank back at his command.

Out into the night air, through the lonely streets went Bronson Granby, never pausing till his garret door was reached. Here his brief strength failed, and all through the watches of the night he sat half-dazed in his chair, his crushed treasure in his hand, his crushed hopes scattered all about him.

Thus the first rays of the wintry morning found him, pale and cold, but smiling as if at some great victory. That "to-morrow" for which he dared not wait had dawned for him in all the glory of eternal radiance.



HER CELESTIAL ADORER*

BY L. HEReward

"If we measure the hearts of others by our own, we shall not find them different."—*Chinese Proverb.*



HE was little, prim, and pious. She was also distractingly pretty.

Three of these qualities are an unusual combination. Therefore worthy of note.

She came up to New York to study book-keeping and shorthand. Her name was Alice Pearson, and she had a mania for converting people.

The house at which she boarded was kept by a stout Irish-American woman—Mrs. Brown. She looked the essence of good nature, but she let the boarders freeze all the winter by never having a fire in the furnace, and she fed them with pork and beans until life became a burden. She had a daughter, Matie, tall, rather well-favored, though running to bone, who was much in love with a man whom I may term the "head-boarder." That is, a person who, having a magnificent constitution, had been able to stand the ravages of Mrs. Brown's pork and beans the longest. He was a medical student, and his name was Caldwell. He was very good-looking, by the bye.

There were sixteen boarders in Mrs. Brown's establishment the first night Miss Pearson came down to dinner. Two weeks afterwards there were twenty-one, and within a month, Mrs. Brown's limit—thirty—had been reached. The newcomers it was noticed were all men; and curiously enough men who, in the rush of New York business life, had time to worry about their souls. The fact was, that before the lovely Miss Pearson had been in the house five weeks, she had nearly ruined the surrounding boarding-houses, and had turned Mrs. Brown's erstwhile peacefully wicked establishment into three opposing revival meetings rolled into one and let loose.

* A selection from "To-Day."

She was so pretty and she was so pious, and the most fascinating thing about her was that, while she really was so good, she did not look it. Her mouse-colored hair broke into the wickedest little curls over her smooth, round brow, and little sinful tendrils crept down her white neck in the most maddening manner. Just underneath her saintly brown left eye there was a distinct though minute dent in the softly pink cheek—in short, probably the most worldly dimple that ever strayed away from that portion of the face usually allotted to dimples, and quite spoiled a prim little maiden's would-be severe expression.

Devastation followed in her wake, but she herself was not to blame. She simply walked serenely and demurely into the eyes of whatever young man she chanced to meet, and from the eyes by a short and easy route to his heart. So it went through the house, and even outside of it.

Fah Chung, laundryman, late of Pekin, subsequently of San Francisco, then of the Bowery, New York, fell as madly and jealously in love with her as if he had been a Christian.

Miss Pearson affected demure little gray frocks with a wide Eton collar and cuffs of white, and Fah Chung—oh, bliss—Fah Chung washed and ironed them for her.

It has been remarked that Miss Pearson had a mania for converting people, which means that she conscientiously harried persons whose religious views differed from her own until the hereafter was not a circumstance to it. Now, it is to be noted that when people talk very much of "Our Brethren" they do very little thinking of our "brothers." The statement is explained thus: Miss Pearson, like most conscientious Americans, regarded people of a different color—say Fah Chung, or Millie, Mrs. Brown's negro waitress—as speaking brethren with souls to save. But Millie as a sister *woman* never entered into her mind, any more than did Fah Chung as a real human *brother*. That those queer slanting eyes of his could see as the eyes of other men saw, or that the heart under those six quilted coats could love and hate and ache, as it was possible the heart under Caldwell's tweed loved, hated, and ached—was a fact beyond her fancying. Yet she felt that she had a duty towards them both, and accordingly began her investigations concerning the state of their souls.

She tried her hand on Millie first, but Mrs. Brown made strong objections to having her servants demoralized by Miss Pearson's religious notions, so that energetic laborer in the vineyard turned her attention to Fah Chung.

"How do you do, Mr. Chung?" she greeted him with one morning when he came for the laundry work.

"Ni cha," replied the Celestial.

Miss Pearson stared.

"I guess he means 'Howdy,' Miss Pearson," struck in Millie, who was sweeping the room.

"Oh! Ni cha, Mr. Sing."

The Chinaman did not change a facial muscle. He did not want to look sad, and he could not grin any harder than he was already doing. The left side of the six padded coats gave a great beat outward.

That was getting on.

The loved one could now converse as fluently in his native tongue as he in hers.

That *was* getting on.

The next time he came he brought one of those little reeds with a bunch of hair fastened in one end, which the Chinese use for pens, and presented it, with his immovable grin. That gentle smile of his was so fixedly wide, that Caldwell declared the top of his head to be an island surrounded by mouth. A somewhat exaggerated metaphor. Still, it was what one might call a *generous* smile.

The following week he laid on her shrine a package of Chinese fire-crackers, and had learned to count up to five in English. She had eight articles in the washing, but he began over again at "one" when he reached the place where "six" ought to be, so that was all right.

Miss Pearson never got beyond "Ni cha" in her study of the Chinese tongue, but Fah Chung applied himself with ardor to the mastery of English, and went about his laundry practicing—"One collie, one collie, two cuff, two cuff, one collie, two cuff." When he got so that he could say, "Allee lightee, washee soon, done Slatteday," Miss Pearson thought it time to begin her spiritual ministrations. Accordingly, she took him down to the boarding-house drawing-room one Saturday, sat him on a stiff horsehair chair just where he got the draughts, between the fireless grate and the door, beautifully, and discoursed to him.

She told the Chinaman that he was a worm fit only for the burning. She dived into the depths of Original Sin, and enlarged on the lake of burning fire and its connection with heathen—Chinamen in particular. Her Celestial catechumen grinned serenely. She grew eloquent over the Scriptural authority

for deep-water baptism (she herself was a Deep-Water Baptist), and she propounded in moving terms the beauties of the doctrine of infant damnation. Fah Chung's little nose got purple, and his little bare ankles showed a fine blue over the neat white shoes, but the heart under the six quilted coats was very warm.

For exactly one hour and thirty-two minutes did the lovely Miss Pearson catechise that unfortunate Oriental, at the end of which time she knelt by the sofa and sent up a prayer that his darkened mind might be enlightened and made to perceive the truth of her words.

The girl was sincerely in earnest, and it was something of a shock when, on rising from her knees, he turned towards her that unchangeable smile, and affably remarked :

"Me likee Melican gal."

Fah Chung slept in a tiny box of a room at the back of his laundry. Presently he took to bunking on his ironing-table and let the box to a lodger. Fah Chung seemed to desire a larger income. The fever of the New World had seized him. He longed to amass riches.

With all her primness, and in spite of her knowledge that everything not absolutely slow must of necessity be sinful, Miss Pearson was of a somewhat adventurous nature. The great town, to her country mind, was full of wonders; and leading, as a woman, even a young and very pretty woman, can, if she choose, in New York, as independent a life as if she were her own brother, she indulged her passion for exploring frequently. Her studies usually occupied the day, but on those evenings when she was not engaged in setting the boarding-house by the ears by catechising one or another fortunate young masculine sinner, she donned a trig little gray bonnet and cloak, and wandered out into the bewitching, brilliant night world.

She was not sure just why, but she found that she felt a little uncomfortable in walking by herself up Broadway, Fifth Avenue, or Madison Square in the evening; but the good-natured crowds in the less fashionable parts of the town never annoyed or frightened her.

What more blissful than to walk down Sixth Avenue, with its cheap restaurants filled with noisy, merry people; to gaze enraptured at the spirited life-sized lion, which one enterprising delicatessen shop-owner had carved out of solid lard, and placed in his window to attract attention. And, after a stroll part way down the avenue, it was very pleasant to cut through into dark,

deserted Thompson Street, and wander about a little while before taking Bond Street or one of the other turnings leading into the upper part of the Bowery.

It was a long time before any one at the boarding-house dreamed that she had gone anywhere except perhaps to chapel or to do a bit of shopping, and then it was Caldwell who found it out. He—good fellow that he was—simply followed at a distance and kept guard.

Now it chanced that a certain pair of narrow slanting black eyes had been keener even than Caldwell's big round brown ones. Their owner periled his "washee-up shop's" reputation for promptness by lingering about the boarding-house every night for an hour after dinner, to learn what his divinity's movements were to be. If she went exploring, so did Fah Chung, and kept an eye on her. It grew more complicated when Caldwell took to shadowing her too. That gentleman never noticed the Chinaman, but Fah Chung did not grin so hard when he looked at Mr. Caldwell, particularly after he had seen Miss Pearson fasten a rose in his buttonhole.

After Miss Pearson had spent five hours and a half on different Saturdays in explaining doctrines to Fah Chung, she came to the conclusion that she was giving him spiritual truths in too large doses. The one word "Christian" really contained all she was trying to teach him; so she gave up lecturing, and contented herself with saying over and over again in a very loud tone:

"Christian, Christian, Mr. Chung—Christian."

He took it that she was teaching him the English for some article in the washing, but he could not hit upon just what one. He would lift a collar and say, "Clistian?" and she would shake her head. Then a cuff, a necktie, an apron. No? Ah! he had it. "Clistian" was evidently the name for the washing collectively. No? Fah Chung pondered deeply. At last he got it.

What! Cut off his pigtail, wear a spotted necktie, a stiff hat, and eat pork? It was a struggle.

He did it, though.

He walked into Miss Pearson's room one day, set down his basket of clothes, and horrified that virgin by remarking:

"Me Clistian now, hellee damme. Eat pigees—damme hellee."

With civilized garb he had adopted civilized language.

There are some things that change not, neither in America nor in China, and the heart of the lover is one. Fah Chung might take the Fourth of July, with fire-crackers and illuminations, to

be a kind of American "Feast of the Lanterns"—a great religious festival, in fact. There he mistook. *Decidedly.*

But Fah Chung was right when he guessed that the object of his passion regarded him no more in the light of a lover than she would some old woman who chose to wear a pigtail and unusual shoes.

He made no mistake either in his interpretation of her difference of manner towards him and the—to him—strange people among whom she lived.

Humanity to her meant Americans, those Englishmen who did not drop their *r*'s or use soft *a*'s, and possibly Germans or French men—if they bought their dress suits ready made and wore bad neckties.

They were all Christians; therefore Fah Chung, as we have seen, became a Christian too.

The change in dress shadowed upon Miss Pearson's mind the fact that her laundryman was a man, and her manner towards him became somewhat reserved. That was good for a beginning. He wrote her a letter—she took it for a laundry list, by the bye—in his native tongue, of course—in which he declared his passion. He knew she could not read it, but it was an outlet for his feelings. He got his Irish lodger to address the envelope. As it stood, she could read the outside and he the inside, so that made it even.

From the translation it would appear that he was not half bad as a lover. It ran thus:

"O beautiful lady, the sun in the heavens is not so bright as your smile; the fur of the mouse is not so soft as your soft hair; whiter than rice are your distinguished teeth. Each hour my stupidity dies until you bestow on my unworthiness your adorable heart. Marry me. We will go to China, where you shall sit forever in the sun and eat stewed mice with golden chopsticks until the full moon is not so round as your face. Oh lady, as beautiful as the moon!"

It was rather a pity that Fah Chung could not have learned a little more of the customs of his adopted country earlier. The knowledge might have saved him from making two great mistakes. The first lay in the fact that he had not curtained his laundry window.

Strolling down the Bowery one bright afternoon and enjoying to the full the rush and roar of life in that Broadway of the lower class "Gothamites," Miss Pearson was amusing herself by count-

ing the different nationalities represented in the shops, and so on. At the last corner she came upon Fah Chung's laundry. She stopped at the window to admire the scrupulous cleanliness and to watch its owner at work.

Now the ways of American laundrywomen are not as the ways of Chinese laundrymen.

The former sprinkles the rough-dried clothes by dipping her hand into a basin of water and flinging the drops from her finger tips. Then she rolls the garment up tightly and lays it away for an hour or two to absorb the moisture evenly.

Not so the Chinaman. He fills his mouth with water and deftly ejects a tiny spray over the garment in hand at the same time he is ironing it.

Fah Chung lovingly pulling out the dainty ruffles of a little white apron with his slender yellow fingers, and ironing with ardor, was probably never so thunderstruck in all his life, as when it was snatched from his hands, and a lovely little face as red as a rose with anger and disgust, disclosed to him Miss Pearson's indignant brown eyes. The rest of her things lay on a shelf near, and, scolding as fast as her tongue could wag, she gathered up, thrust them into a piece of paper, threw a half dollar upon the table, and marched away, the amazed Chung in the meantime standing in helpless bewilderment, his cheeks puffed out with his mouth full of water, and his black eyes staring.

After that Miss Pearson sent her things to an Irishwoman, who scrubbed them to pieces within a month, and the laundry of Fah Chung knew them no more. Alas!

His second mistake—a fatal one—sprang from a national difference of views regarding death and all things appertaining thereto which exists between the extreme East and the West.

He sent her a most gorgeous and comfortable coffin—life size—for a Christmas present.

Anyone in China would have been flattered no end by such a splendid gift. Miss Pearson did not seem to like it.

In fact she took it as an intimation on the Celestial's part that the "wooden overcoat"—as they are facetiously termed in the States—would presently have a wearer, whom he, in remembrance of the scene in the laundry, would gladly provide.

It is probable that Fah Chung would have been kicked farther down the street than he was but that Caldwell, who was in the drawing-room when the gift was presented, had to leave him just then.

Miss Pearson in her agitation seemed to require some one to hold her in his arms, and call her his darling, and assure her that just as soon as he had time he would "go and finish that Chinaman." She would not let any of the other fellows do it—Matie did not offer to—so Caldwell sacrificed himself. Good old fellow! Matie glanced at them, and looked rather as if she could have found a use for that coffin if they had not been in such haste to pitch it into the street after its heart-broken owner.

The little Chinaman crept miserably away, wondering at the uncivilized manners of those "western barbarians." But even then " 'is 'rt was true"—not to Poll, but to Pearson.

Caldwell married Miss Pearson.


Fah Chung? Ah, yes; Fah Chung.

Well, he got killed one night near the Bowery.

Caldwell, at that time accepted lover to Miss Pearson, had told her that she must on no account venture into any of the streets between lower Broadway and the Bowery alone. So one evening, when he was at the hospital, she felt it her imperative duty to do so. She wandered about Mulberry Street, the Italian quarter, for awhile, and did the Jewish precinct—Baxter Street—unconscious of two figures that had been following her for the last half hour. From the top of Baxter Street there is a short, very narrow, very dark turning leading into the wide and brilliantly-lighted Bowery. This turning is very quiet. It is filled with Chinese gambling hells and opium dens. The police rather avoid the place. It rejoices in the descriptive and suggestive local name of "Dead Man's Alley." As Miss Pearson was about to enter it, she was stopped by a Chinaman, who motioned her not to come that way. Recognizing Fah Chung she indignantly brushed past him, and with great stateliness proceeded on.

Half-way between Baxter Street and the Bowery, a stealthy figure stole close behind her—another figure quickly and quietly ran between them, there was a muttered oath, a slight struggle, and something gleamed in the hand of the taller one. Just then Miss Pearson reached the Bowery, and in Dead Man's Alley one man was running swiftly and silently toward the sheltering crowds in Baxter Street, and the other, a little Chinaman, lay on the ground bleeding to death. When Miss Pearson, on reaching home, found that her purse was gone, she exclaimed:

"There! I *knew* that a creature who sprinkled clothes in the *disgusting* way *he* did, wasn't honest!"



A TERRIBLY STRANGE BED

BY WILKIE COLLINS

Famous Story Series



THE most difficult likeness I ever had to take, not even excepting my first attempt in the art of portrait-painting, was a likeness of a gentleman named Faulkner. As far as drawing and coloring went I had no particular fault to find with my picture. It was the *expression* of the sitter which I had failed in rendering—a failure quite as much his fault as mine. Mr. Faulkner, like many other persons by whom I have been employed, took it into his head that he must assume an expression because he was sitting for his likeness, and in consequence contrived to look as unlike himself as possible while I was painting him. I had tried to divert his attention from his own face by talking with him on all sorts of topics. We had both travelled a great deal and felt interested alike in many subjects connected with our wanderings over the same countries. Occasionally, while we were discussing our travelling experiences, the unlucky set-look left his countenance and I began to work to some purpose, but it was always disastrously sure to return again before I had made any great progress; or, in other words, just at the very time when I was most anxious that it should not reappear. The obstacle thus thrown in the way of the satisfactory completion of my portrait was the more to be deplored because Mr. Faulkner's natural expression was a very remarkable one. I am not an author, so I cannot describe it. I ultimately succeeded

in painting it, however, and this was the way in which I achieved my success :

On the morning when my sitter was coming to me for the fourth time I was looking at his portrait in no very agreeable mood—looking at it, in fact, with the disheartening conviction that the picture would be a perfect failure unless the expression in the face represented were thoroughly altered and improved from nature. The only method of accomplishing this successfully was to make Mr. Faulkner somehow insensibly forget that he was sitting for his picture. What topic could I lead him to talk on which could entirely engross his attention while I was at work on his likeness ? I was still puzzling my brains to no purpose on this subject when Mr. Faulkner entered my studio, and shortly afterwards an accidental circumstance gained for me the very object which my own ingenuity had proved unequal to compass.

While I was "setting" my palette my sitter amused himself by turning over some portfolios. He happened to select one for special notice which contained several sketches that I had made in the streets of Paris. He turned over the first five views rapidly enough, but when he came to the sixth I saw his face flush directly and observed that he took the drawing out of the portfolio, carried it to the window and remained silently absorbed in the contemplation of it for full five minutes. After that he turned round to me, and asked very anxiously if I had any objection to part with that sketch.

It was the least interesting of the series—merely a view of the streets running by the backs of the houses in the Palais Royal. Some four or five of these houses were comprised in the view, which was of no particular use to me in any way, and which was too valueless as a work of art for me to think of *selling* it to my kind patron. I begged his acceptance of it at once. He thanked me quite warmly, and then, seeing that I looked a little surprised at the odd selection he had made from my sketches, laughingly asked me if I could guess why he had been so anxious to become possessed of the view which I had given him.

"Probably," I answered, "there is some remarkable historical association connected with that street at the back of the Palais Royal of which I am ignorant."

"No," said Mr. Faulkner, "at least none that *I* know of. The only association connected with the place in *my* mind is a purely personal association. Look at this house in your draw-

ing, the house with the water-pipe running down it from top to bottom. I once passed a night there—a night I shall never forget to the day of my death. I have had some awkward travelling adventures in my time, but *that* adventure. Well, well! Suppose we begin the sitting. I make but a bad return for your kindness in giving me the sketch by thus wasting your time in mere talk."

He had not long occupied the sitter's chair (looking pale and thoughtful) when he returned, involuntarily, as it seemed, to the subject of the house in the back street. Without, I hope, showing any undue curiosity, I contrived to let him see that I felt a deep interest in everything he now said. After two or three preliminary hesitations he at last, to my great joy, fairly started on the narrative of his adventure. In the interest of his subject he soon forgot that he was sitting for his portrait—the very expression that I wanted came over his face—my picture proceeded towards completion in the right direction and to the best purpose. At every fresh touch I felt more and more certain that I was now getting the better of my grand difficulty, and I enjoyed the additional gratification of having my work lightened by the recital of a true story which possessed, in my estimation, all the excitement of the most exciting romance.

This, as nearly as I can recollect, is word for word how Mr. Faulkner told me the story :

Shortly before the period when gambling-houses were suppressed by the French Government, I happened to be staying at Paris with an English friend. We were both young men then, and lived, I am afraid, a very dissipated life in the very dissipated city of our sojourn. One night we were idling about the neighborhood of the Palais Royal, doubtful as to what amusement we should next betake ourselves. My friend proposed a visit to Frascati's, but his suggestion was not to my taste. I knew Frascati's, as the French saying is, by heart, had lost and won plenty of five-franc pieces there, "merely for the fun of the thing," until it was "fun" no longer; and was thoroughly tired, in fact, of all the ghastly respectabilities of such a social anomaly as a respectable gambling-house. "For Heaven's sake," said I to my friend, "let us go somewhere where we can see a little genuine, blackguard, poverty-stricken gaming, with no false ginger-bread glitter thrown over it all. Let us get away from fashionable Frascati's to a house where they don't mind letting in a man with a ragged coat, or a man with no coat, ragged or otherwise."

"Very well," said my friend, "we needn't go out of the Palais Royal to find the sort of company you want. Here's the place just before us, as blackguard a place, by all report, as you could possibly wish to see." In another minute we arrived at the door and entered the house, the back of which you have drawn in your sketch.

When we got upstairs, and had left our hats and sticks with the doorkeeper, we were admitted into the chief gambling-room. We did not find many people assembled there. But, few as the men were who looked up at us on our entrance, they were all types—miserable types—of their respective classes. We had come to see blackguards, but these men were something worse. There is a comic side, more or less appreciable, in all blackguardism. Here there was nothing but tragedy; mute, weird tragedy. The quiet in the room was horrible. The thin, haggard, long-haired young man whose sunken eyes fiercely watched the turning of the cards, never spoke; the flabby, fat-faced, pimply player, who pricked his piece of pasteboard perseveringly to register how often black won, and how often red, never spoke; the dirty, wrinkled old man, with the vulture eyes and the darned great coat, who had lost his last sou, and still looked on desperately after he could play no longer, never spoke. Even the voice of the croupier sounded as if it were strangely dulled and thickened in the atmosphere of the room. I had entered the place to laugh. I felt that if I stood quietly looking on much longer I should be more likely to weep. So, to excite myself out of the depression of spirits which was fast stealing over me, I unfortunately went to the table and began to play. Still more unfortunately, as the event will show, I won—won prodigiously; won incredibly; won at such a rate that the regular players at the table crowded around me, and, staring at my stakes with hungry, superstitious eyes, whispered to one another that the English stranger was going to break the bank.

The game was rouge et noir. I had played at it in every city in Europe, without, however, the care or the wish to study the Theory of Chances—that philosopher's stone of all gamblers. And a gambler, in the strict sense of the word, I had never been. I was heart-whole from the corroding passion for play. My gaming was a mere idle amusement. I never resorted to it by necessity, because I never knew what it was to want money. I never practiced it so incessantly as to lose more than I could afford, or to gain more than I could coolly pocket without being

thrown off my balance by my good luck. In short, I had hitherto frequented gambling-tables—just as I frequented ball-rooms and opera-houses—because they amused me and because I had nothing better to do with my leisure hours.

But on this occasion it was very different—now, for the first time in my life, I felt what the passion for play really was. My success first bewildered, and then in the most literal meaning of the word intoxicated me. Incredible as it may appear, it is nevertheless true that I only lost when I attempted to estimate chances and played according to previous calculation. If I left everything to luck, and staked without any care or consideration, I was sure to win—to win in the face of every recognized probability in favor of the bank. At first, some of the men present ventured their money safely enough on my color; but I speedily increased my stakes to sums which they dared not risk. One after another they left off playing, and breathlessly looked on at my game. Still, time after time, I staked higher and higher; and still won. The excitement in the room rose to fever pitch. The silence was interrupted by a deep-muttered chorus of oaths and exclamations in different languages, every time the gold was shovelled across to my side of the table—even the imperturbable croupier dashed his rake on the floor in a (French) fury of astonishment at my success. But one man present preserved his self-possession; and that man was my friend. He came to my side and, whispering in English, begged me to leave the place, satisfied with what I had already gained. I must do him the justice to say that he repeated his warnings and entreaties several times, and only left me and went away after I had rejected his advice (I was to all intents and purposes gambling-drunk) in terms which rendered it impossible for him to address me again that night.

Shortly after he had gone, a hoarse voice behind me cried : “Permit me, my dear sir!—permit me to restore to their proper place two napoleons which you have dropped. Wonderful luck, sir!—I pledge you my word of honor as an old soldier, in the course of my long experience in this sort of thing I never saw such luck as yours!—never! Go on, sir—*Sacré mille bombes!* Go on boldly, and break the bank!”

I turned round and saw nodding and smiling at me with inveterate civility, a tall man dressed in a frogged and braided surtout. If I had been in my senses I should have considered him personally as being rather a suspicious specimen of an old

soldier. He had goggling, bloodshot eyes, mangy mustachios, and a broken nose. His voice betrayed a barrack-room intonation of the worst order, and he had the dirtiest pair of hands I ever saw—even in France. These little personal peculiarities exercised, however, no repelling influence on me. In the mad excitement, the reckless triumph of that moment, I was ready to “fraternize” with anybody who encouraged me in my game. I accepted the old soldier’s offered pinch of snuff; clapped him on the back, and swore he was the honestest fellow in the world; the most glorious relic of the Grand Army that I had ever met. “Go on!” cried my military friend, snapping his fingers in ecstasy—“Go on, and win! Break the bank—*mille tonnerres!* my gallant English comrade, break the bank!”

And I *did* go on—went on at such a rate that in another quarter of an hour the croupier called out: “Gentlemen! the bank has discontinued for to-night.” All the notes, and all the gold in that “bank” now lay in a heap under my hands; the whole floating capital of the gambling-house was waiting to pour into my pockets!

“Tie up the money in your pocket-handkerchief, my worthy sir,” said the old soldier, as I wildly plunged my hands into my heap of gold. “Tie it up as we used to tie up a bit of dinner in the Grand Army; your winnings are too heavy for any breeches pockets that ever were sewn. There! that’s it!—shovel them in, notes and all! *Credit!* what luck!—Stop! another napoleon on the floor! *Ah! sacré petit polisson de Napoleon!* have I found thee at last? Now then, sir—two tight double knots each way with your honorable permission, and the money’s safe. Feel it! feel it, fortunate sir! hard and round as a cannon-ball—*Ah, bah!* if they had only fired such cannon-balls at us at Austerlitz—*nom d’une pipe!* if they only had! And now, as an ancient grenadier, as an ex-brave of the French army, what remains for me to do? I ask what? Simply this: to entreat my valued English friend to drink a bottle of champagne with me, and toast the goddess Fortune in foaming goblets before we part!”

“Excellent ex-brave! Convivial ancient grenadier! Champagne by all means! An English cheer for an old soldier! Hurrah! hurrah! Another English cheer for the goddess Fortune! Hurrah! Hurrah Hurrah!”

“Bravo! the Englishman the amiable, gracious Englishman, in whose veins circulates the vivacious blood of France!

Another glass? *Ah, bah!* the bottle is empty! Never mind! *Vive le vin!* I, the old soldier, order another bottle and a half-a-pound of *bon-bons* with it!"

"No, no, *ex-brave*; never, ancient grenadier! *Your* bottle last time; *my* bottle this. Behold it! Toast away! The French Army! the great Napoleon! the present company! the croupier! the honest croupier's wife and daughters, if he has any! the ladies, generally! Everybody in the world!"

By the time the second bottle of champagne was emptied, I felt as if I had been drinking liquid fire, my brain seemed all aflame. No excess in wine had ever had this effect on me before in my life. Was it the result of a stimulant acting upon my system when I was in a highly-excited state? Was my stomach in a particularly disordered condition? Or was the champagne particularly strong?

"*Ex-brave* of the French Army!" cried I, in a mad state of exhilaration. "*I* am on fire! how are *you*? You have set me on fire! Do you hear, my hero of Austerlitz? Let us have a third bottle of champagne to put out the flame!" The old soldier wagged his head, rolled his goggle-eyes, until I expected to see them slip out of their sockets; placed his dirty forefinger by the side of his broken nose; solemnly ejaculated "*Coffee!*" and immediately ran off into an inner room.

The word pronounced by the eccentric veteran seemed to have a magical effect on the rest of the company present. With one accord they all rose to depart. Probably they had expected to profit by my intoxication; but finding that my new friend was benevolently bent on preventing me from getting dead drunk, had now abandoned all hope of thriving pleasantly on my winnings. Whatever their motive might be, at any rate they went away in a body. When the old soldier returned, and sat down again opposite to me at the table, we had the room to ourselves. I could see the croupier in a sort of vestibule which opened out of it, eating his supper in solitude. The silence was now deeper than ever.

A sudden change, too, had come over the "*ex-brave*." He assumed a portentously solemn look; and when he spoke to me again, his speech was ornamented by no oaths, enforced by no finger-snapping, enlivened by no apostrophes or exclamations.

"Listen, my dear sir," said he, in mysteriously confidential tones, "listen to an old soldier's advice. I have been to the mistress of the house (a very charming woman with a genius for

cookery!) to impress on her the necessity of making us some particularly strong and good coffee. You must drink this coffee in order to get rid of your little amiable exaltation of spirits before you think of going home, you *must*, my good and gracious friend! With all that money, you take home to-night, it is a sacred duty to yourself to have your wits about you. You are known to be a winner to an enormous extent by several gentlemen present to-night, who, in a certain point of view, are very worthy and excellent fellows; but they are mortal men, my dear sir, and they have their amiable weaknesses! Need I say more? Ah, no, no! You understand me! Now, this is what you must do: send for a cabriolet when you feel quite well again, draw up all the windows when you get into it, and tell the driver to take you home only through the large and well-lighted thoroughfares. Do this, and you and your money will be safe. Do this, and to-morrow you will thank an old soldier for giving you a word of honest advice."

Just as the ex-brave ended his oration in very lachrymose tones, the coffee came in, ready poured out in two cups. My attentive friend handed me one of the cups with a bow. I was parched with thirst and drank it off at a draught. Almost instantly afterwards I was seized with a fit of giddiness and felt more completely intoxicated than ever. The room whirled round and round furiously; the old soldier seemed to be regularly bobbing up and down before me like the piston of a steam-engine. I was half deafened by a violent singing in my ears; a feeling of utter bewilderment, helplessness, idiocy, overcame me. I rose from my chair, holding on by the table to keep my balance, and stammered out that I felt dreadfully unwell—so unwell that I did not know how I was to get home.

"My dear friend," answered the ex-soldier; and even his voice seemed to be bobbing up and down as he spoke—"my dear friend, it would be madness to go home in *your* state. You would be sure to lose your money; you might be robbed and murdered with the greatest ease. *I* am going to sleep here; do *you* sleep here, too—they make up capital beds in this house—take one; sleep off the effects of the wine, and go home safely with your winnings, to-morrow, to-morrow, in broad daylight."

I had no power of thinking, no feeling of any kind, but the feeling that I must lie down somewhere, immediately, and fall off into a cool, refreshing, comfortable sleep. So I agreed eagerly to the proposal about the bed, and took the offered arms

of the old soldier and the croupier—the latter having been summoned to show the way. They led me along some passages and up a short flight of stairs into the bedroom which I was to occupy. The ex-brave shook me warmly by the hand, proposed that we should breakfast together the next morning, and then, followed by the croupier, left me for the night.

I ran to the washstand, drank some of the water in my jug, poured the rest out and plunged my face into it, then sat down in a chair and tried to compose myself. I soon felt better. The change for my lungs from the fetid atmosphere of the gambling-room to the cool air of the apartment I now occupied; the almost equally refreshing change for my eyes from the glaring gaslights of the "Salon," to the dim, quiet flicker of one bedroom candle, aided wonderfully the restorative effects of cold water. The giddiness left me and I began to feel a little like a reasonable being again. My first thought was of the risk of sleeping all night in a gambling-house; my second, of the still greater risk of trying to get out after the house was closed, and of going home alone at night through the streets of Paris with a large sum of money about me. I had slept in worse places than this in the course of my travels, so I determined to lock, bolt, and barricade my door.

Accordingly I secured myself against all intrusion, looked under the bed and into the cupboard, tried the fastening of the window; and then, satisfied that I had taken every proper precaution, pulled off my upper clothing, put my light, which was a dim one, on the hearth among a feathery litter of wood ashes, and got into bed with the handkerchief full of money under my pillow.

I soon felt, not only that I could not go to sleep, but that I could not even close my eyes. I was wide awake and in a high fever. Every nerve in my body trembled—every one of my senses seemed to be preternaturally sharpened. I tossed and rolled, and tried every kind of position, and perseveringly sought out the cold corners of the bed, and all to no purpose. Now, I thrust my arms over the clothes; now, I poked them under the clothes; now, I violently shot out my legs, straight out down to the bottom of the bed; now, I convulsively coiled them up as near my chin as they would go; now I shook out my crumpled pillow, changed it to the cool side, patted it flat, and lay down quietly on my back; now, I fiercely doubled it in two, set it up on end, thrust it against the board of the bed, and tried a sitting

posture. Every effort was in vain ; I groaned with vexation, as I felt that I was in for a sleepless night.

What could I do ? I had no book to read. And yet, unless I found out some method of diverting my mind I felt certain that I was in the condition to imagine all sorts of horrors ; to rack my brains with forebodings of every possible and impossible danger ; in short, to pass the night in suffering all conceivable varieties of nervous terror. I raised myself on my elbow and looked about the room—which was brightened by a lovely moonlight pouring straight through the window - to see if it contained any pictures or ornaments that I could at all clearly distinguish. While my eyes wandered from wall to wall, a remembrance of *Le Maistre's* delightful little book, "*Voyage autour de ma Chambre*," occurred to me. I resolved to imitate the French author, and find occupation and amusement enough to relieve the tedium of my wakefulness, by making a mental inventory of every article of furniture I could see, and by following up to their sources the multitude of associations which even a chair, a table, or a washstand may be made to call forth.

In the nervous, unsettled state of my mind at that moment, I found it much easier to make my proposed inventory than to make my proposed reflections, and soon gave up all hope of thinking in *Le Maistre's* fanciful track—or, indeed, of thinking at all. I looked about the room at the different articles of furniture, and did nothing more. There was first, the bed I was lying in—a four-post bed, of all things in the world to meet with in Paris!—yes, a thorough, clumsy British four-poster, with the regular top lined with chintz—the regular fringed valance all round—the regular stifling, unwholesome curtains, which I remember having mechanically drawn back against the posts without particularly noticing the bed when I first got into the room. Then, there was the marble-topped wash-hand-stand, from which the water I had spilt in my hurry to pour it out was still dripping, slowly and more slowly on to the brick floor. Then, two small chairs, with my coat, waistcoat, and trousers flung on them. Then, a large elbow chair covered with dirty white dimity, with my cravat and shirt-collar thrown over the back. Then, a chest of drawers, with two of the brass handles off, and a tawdry, broken china inkstand placed on it by way of ornament for the top. Then, the dressing-table, adorned by a very small looking-glass and a very large pincushion. Then, the window—an unusually large window. Then, a dark old pic-

ture of a fellow in a high Spanish hat crowned with a plume of towering feathers. A swarthy, sinister ruffian, looking upward; shading his eyes with his hand and looking intently upward—it might be at some tall gallows at which he was going to be hanged. At any rate he had the appearance of thoroughly deserving it.

This picture put a kind of constraint upon me to look upward too—at the top of the bed. It was a gloomy and not an interesting object, and I looked back at the picture. I counted the feathers in the man's hat; they stood out in relief: three white, two green. I observed the crown of his hat, which was of a conical shape, according to the fashion supposed to have been favored by Guido Fawkes. I wondered what he was looking up at. It couldn't be at the stars; such a desperado was neither astrologer nor astronomer. It must be at the high gallows, and he was going to be hanged presently. Would the executioner come into possession of his conical crowned hat and plume of feathers? I counted the feathers again: three, white; two, green.

Good God, the man had pulled his hat down on his brows! No! The hat itself was gone! Where was the conical crown? Where the feathers: three, white; two, green? Not there! In place of the hat and feathers what dusky object was it that now hid his forehead—his eyes—his shading hand? Was the bed moving?

I turned on my back and looked up. Was I mad? drunk? dreaming? giddy again? or, was the top of the bed really moving down—sinking slowly, regularly, silently, horribly, right down throughout the whole of its length and breadth—right down upon me, as I lay underneath?

My blood seemed to stand still; a deadly paralyzing coldness stole all over me, as I turned my head round on the pillow and determined to test whether the bed-top was really moving or not, by keeping my eye on the man in the picture. The next look in that direction was enough. The dull, black, frowsy outline of the valance above me was within an inch of being parallel with his waist. I still looked breathlessly. And steadily and slowly—very slowly—I saw the figure, and the line of frame below the figure, vanish as the valance moved down before it.

I am, constitutionally, anything but timid. I have been on more than one occasion in peril of my life and have not lost my self-possession for an instant; but when the conviction first

settled on my mind that the bed-top was really moving, was steadily and continuously sinking down upon me, I looked up for one awful minute or more, shuddering, helpless, panic-stricken, beneath the hideous machinery for murder which was advancing closer and closer to suffocate me where I lay.

Then the instinct of self-preservation came and nerved me to save my life while there was yet time. I got out of bed very quietly and quickly dressed myself again in my upper clothing. The candle, fully spent, went out. I sat down in the armchair that stood near and watched the bed-top slowly descending. I was literally spellbound by it. If I had heard footsteps behind me, I could not have turned round; if a means of escape had been miraculously provided for me, I could not have moved to take advantage of it. The whole life in me was, at that moment, concentrated in my eyes.

It descended—the whole canopy with the fringe around it, came down—down—close down; so close that there was not room now to squeeze my finger between the bed-top and the bed. I felt at the sides, and discovered that what had appeared to me from beneath to be the ordinary light canopy of a four-post bed was in reality a thick, broad mattress, the substance of which was concealed by the valance and its fringe. I looked up and saw the four posts rising hideously bare. In the middle of the bed top was a huge wooden screw that had evidently worked it down through a hole in the ceiling, just as ordinary presses are worked down on the substance selected for compression. The frightful apparatus moved without making the faintest noise. There had been no creaking as it came down; there was now not the faintest sound from the room above. Amid a dead and awful silence I beheld before me—in the nineteenth century, and in the civilized capital of France—such a machine for secret murder by suffocation as might have existed in the worst days of the Inquisition, in the lonely inns among the Hartz Mountains, in the mysterious tribunals of Westphalia! Still, as I looked on it I could not move; I could hardly breathe; but I began to recover the power of thinking; and, in a moment I discovered the murderous conspiracy framed against me in all its horror.

My cup of coffee had been drugged, and drugged too strongly. I had been saved from being smothered by having taken an overdose of some narcotic. How I had chafed and fretted at the fever-fit which had preserved my life by keeping me

awake! How recklessly I had confided myself to the two wretches who had led me into this room, determined, for the sake of my winnings, to kill me in my sleep by the surest and most horrible contrivance for secretly accomplishing my destruction! How many men, winners like me, had slept as I had proposed to sleep in that bed, and never been seen or heard of more? I shuddered as I thought of it.

But, ere long, all thought was again suspended by the sight of the murderous canopy moving once more. After it had remained on the bed—as nearly as I could guess—about ten minutes, it began to move up again. The villains who worked it from above evidently believed that their purpose was now accomplished. Slowly and silently, as it had descended, that horrible bed-top rose towards its former place. When it reached the upper extremities of the four posts it reached the ceiling too. Neither hole nor screw could be seen—the bed became in appearance an ordinary bed again, the canopy an ordinary canopy, even to the most suspicious eyes.

Now, for the first time, I was able to move, to rise from my chair, to consider of how I should escape. If I betrayed by the smallest noise that the attempt to suffocate me had failed I was certain to be murdered. Had I made any noise already? No! no footsteps in the passage outside; no sound of a tread, light or heavy, in the room above—absolute silence everywhere. Besides locking and bolting my door I had moved an old wooden chest against it which I had found under the bed. To remove this chest (my blood ran cold as I thought what its contents *might* be!) without making some disturbance, was impossible; and, moreover, to think of escaping through the house, now barred up for the night, was sheer insanity. Only one chance was left me—the window. I stole to it on tiptoe.

My bedroom was on the first floor, above an *entresol*, and looked into the back street, which you have sketched in your view. I raised my hand to open the window, knowing that on that action hung by the merest hair's-breadth my chance of safety. They keep vigilant watch in a House of Murder—if any part of the frame cracked, if the hinge creaked, I was, perhaps, a lost man! It must have occupied me at least five minutes, reckoning by time—five hours reckoning by suspense—to open that window. I succeeded in doing it silently, in doing it with all the dexterity of a house-breaker; and then looked down into the street. To leap the distance beneath me would be al-

most certain destruction! Next, I looked round at the sides of the house. Down the left side ran the thick water-pipe which you have drawn—it passed close by the outer edge of the window. The moment I saw the pipe I knew I was saved; my breath came and went freely for the first time since I had seen the canopy of the bed moving down upon me!

To some men the means of escape which I had discovered might have seemed difficult and dangerous enough—to *me*, the prospect of slipping down the pipe into the street did not suggest even a thought of peril. I had always been accustomed, by the practice of gymnastics, to keep up my school-boy powers as a daring and expert climber; and knew that my head, hands, and feet would serve me faithfully in any hazards of ascent or descent. I had already got one leg over the window-sill when I remembered the handkerchief filled with money under my pillow. I could well have afforded to leave it behind me; but I was revengefully determined that the miscreants of the gambling-house should miss their plunder as well as their victim. So I went back to the bed and tied the heavy handkerchief at my back by my cravat. Just as I had made it tight and fixed it in a comfortable place, I thought I heard a sound of breathing outside the door. The chill feeling of horror ran through me again as I listened. No, dead silence still in the passage! I had only heard the night-air blowing softly into the room. The next moment I was on the window-sill—and the next I had a firm grip on the water-pipe with my hands and knees.

I slid down into the street easily and quietly, as I thought I should, and immediately set off at the top of my speed to a branch "Prefecture" of Police, which I knew was situated in the immediate neighborhood. A "Sub-Prefect" and several picked men among his subordinates happened to be up, maturing, I believe, some scheme for discovering the perpetrator of a mysterious murder which all Paris was talking of just then. When I began my story in a breathless hurry and in very bad French, I could see that the Sub-Prefect suspected me of being a drunken Englishman who had robbed somebody, but he soon altered his opinion as I went on; and before I had anything like concluded, he shoved all the papers before him into a drawer, put on his hat, supplied me with another (for I was bareheaded), ordered a file of soldiers, desired his expert followers to get ready all sorts of tools for breaking open doors and ripping up brick flooring, and took my arm in the most friendly and familiar manner pos-

sible, to lead me with him out of the house. I will venture to say that when the Sub-Prefect was a little boy and was taken for the first time to the play, he was not half as much pleased as he was now at the job in prospect for him at the "Gambling House!"

Away we went through the streets, the Sub-Prefect cross-examining and congratulating me in the same breath, as we marched at the head of our formidable posse comitatus. Sentinels were placed at the back and front of the gambling-house the moment we got to it; a tremendous battery of knocks was directed against the door; a light appeared at a window. I waited to conceal myself behind the police; then came more knocks and a cry of "Open in the name of the law!" At that terrible summons, bolts and locks gave way before an invisible hand, and the moment after the Sub-Prefect was in the passage, confronting a waiter, half-dressed and ghastly pale. This was the short dialogue which immediately took place:

"We want to see the Englishman who is sleeping in this house!"

"He went away hours ago."

"He did no such thing. His friend went away; *he* remained. Show us to his bedroom!"

"I swear to you, Monsieur le Sous-Prefet, he is not here! he——"

"I swear to you, Monsieur le Garçon, he is. He slept here—he didn't find your bed comfortable—he came to us to complain of it—here he is, among my men—and here am I, ready to look for a flea or two in his bedstead. Picard!" calling to one of the subordinates and pointing to the waiter, "collar that man and tie his hands behind him. Now, then, gentlemen, let us walk upstairs!"

Every man and woman in the house was secured—the "Old Soldier" the first. Then I identified the bed in which I had slept; and then we went into the room above. No object that was at all extraordinary appeared in any part of it. The Sub-Prefect looked round the place, commanded everybody to be silent, stamped twice on the floor, called for a candle, looked attentively at the spot he had stamped on, and ordered the flooring there to be carefully taken up. This was done in no time. Lights were produced, and we saw a deep, raftered cavity between the floor of this room and the ceiling of the room beneath. Through this cavity there ran perpendicularly a sort of case of iron,

thickly greased ; and inside the case appeared the screw which communicated with the bed-top below. Extra lengths of screw freshly oiled—levers covered with felt—all the complete upper works of a heavy press, constructed with infernal ingenuity so as to join the fixtures below, and when taken to pieces again, to go into the smallest compass—were next discovered and pulled out on the floor. After some little difficulty, the Sub-Prefect succeeded in putting the machinery together, and leaving his men to work it, descended with me to the bedroom. The smothering canopy was then lowered, but not so noiselessly as I had seen it lowered. When I mentioned this to the Sub-Prefect, his answer, simple as it was, had a terrible significance. "My men," said he, "are working down the bed-top for the first time—the men whose money you won were in better practice."

We left the house in the sole possession of two police agents, every one of the inmates being removed to prison on the spot. The Sub-Prefect, after taking down my "procès-verbal" in his office, returned with me to my hotel to get my passport. "Do you think," I asked, as I gave it to him, "that any men have really been smothered in that bed as they tried to smother me?"

"I have seen dozens of drowned men laid out at the Morgue," answered the Sub-Prefect, "in whose pocket-books were found letters stating that they had committed suicide in the Seine because they had lost everything at the gaming-table. Do I know how many of those men entered the same gambling-house that *you* entered? won as *you* won? took that bed as *you* took it? slept in it? were smothered in it? and were privately thrown into the river with a letter of explanation written by the murderers and placed in their pocket-books? No man can say how many or how few have suffered the fate from which you have escaped. The people of the gambling-house kept their bedstead machinery a secret from *us*—even from the police! The dead kept the rest of the secret for them. Good-night, or rather good-morning, Monsieur Faulkner. Be at my office again at nine o'clock. In the meantime, au revoir!"

The rest of my story is soon told. I was examined and re-examined; the gambling-house was strictly searched all through from top to bottom; the prisoners were separately interrogated, and two of the less guilty among them made a confession. I discovered that the "Old Soldier" was the master of the gambling-house; *justice* discovered that he had been drummed out

of the army as a vagabond years ago ; that he had been guilty of all sorts of villainies since ; that he was in possession of stolen property, which the owners identified ; and that he, the croupier, another accomplice, and the woman who had made my cup of coffee were all in the secret of the bedstead. There appeared some reason to doubt whether the inferior persons attached to the house knew anything of the suffocating machinery, and they received the benefit of that doubt by being treated simply as thieves and vagabonds. As for the Old Soldier and his two head myrmidons, they went to the galleys ; the woman who had drugged my coffee was imprisoned for I forget how many years ; the regular attendants at the gambling-house were considered "suspicious" and placed under "surveillance," and I became for one whole week (which is a long time) the head "lion" in Parisian society. My adventure was dramatized by three illustrious play-makers, but never saw theatrical daylight, for the censorship forbade the introduction on the stage of a correct copy of the gambling-house bedstead.

Two good results were produced by my adventure which any censorship must have approved. In the first place, it helped to justify the Government in forthwith carrying out their determination to put down all gambling-houses ; in the second place, it cured me of ever again trying "rouge et noir" as an amusement. The sight of a green cloth, with packs of cards and heaps of money on it, will henceforth be forever associated in my mind with the sight of a bed-canopy descending to suffocate me in the silence and darkness of the night.

Just as Mr. Faulkner pronounced the last words he started in his chair and assumed a stiff, dignified position in a great hurry. "Bless my soul !" cried he, with a comic look of astonishment and vexation, "while I have been telling you what is the real secret of my interest in the sketch you have so kindly given to me, I have altogether forgotten that I came here to sit for my portrait. For the last hour or more I must have been the worst model you ever had to paint from."


"On the contrary you have been the best," said I. "I have been painting from your expression, and while telling your story you have unconsciously shown me the natural expression I wanted."

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Christmas, 1894

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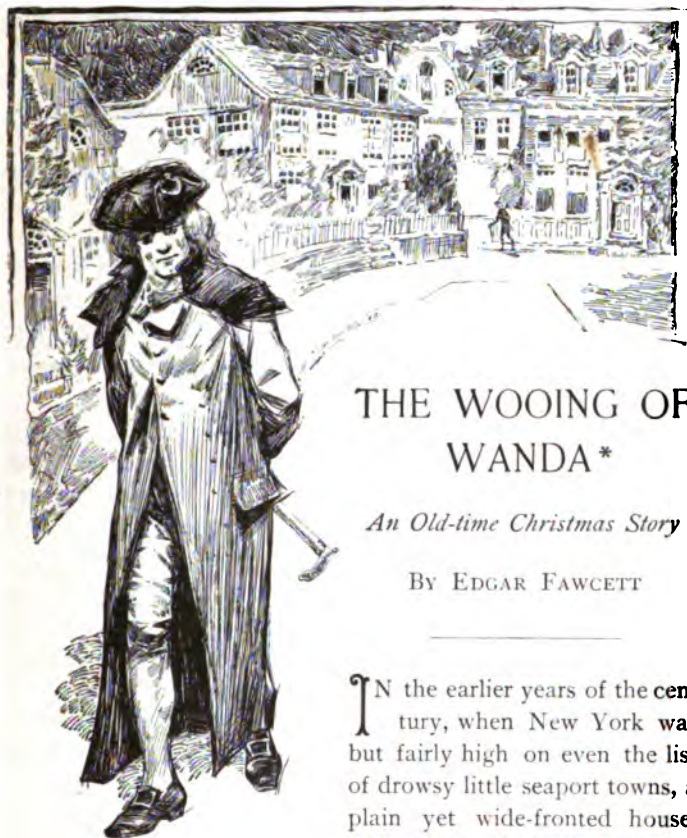
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THE WOOING OF WANDA *

An Old-time Christmas Story

BY EDGAR FAWCETT

IN the earlier years of the century, when New York was but fairly high on even the list of drowsy little seaport towns, a plain yet wide-fronted house, with marks of simple elegance about its exterior, stood in Beaver Street, not far from Bowling Green. Long since destroyed and forgotten, it was the home of a family that were once of high social place.

But the Van Brughs, though still important and wealthy, were now a sadly diminished race. All their fine ancestors, famed in fight and politics and law, had perished. In the quiet Beaver Street mansion lived a gentleman of intensely secluded habits, whose name was Alston Van Brugh, and whose position as head of his family had once been undisputed. He now

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passed his days in great loneliness. Occasionally his tall, bent figure could be seen on Broadway or among the breeze-swept paths of the Battery. But he rarely bowed even to those who had been his intimates in other hours. His handsome face, with its cameo-like profile, was forever set in one expression of absorbed melancholy. Beneath his hat, wide of brim and low of crown, the snowy locks fell sparsely, yet touched the somewhat rusty black of his high stock. Sometimes he would stand for long intervals, with eyes fixed wistfully yet sternly on the shores of Staten Island, where the Narrows go sparkling away to open sea.

"Is he thinking of his wife?" people would ask one another, furtively watching him. "Heavens, what a wreck that woman has made of him! That this should be Alston Van Brugh, the merry and blithe-hearted man of fashion, whose gay dances and suppers, always presided over by the beautiful Southern heiress and belle he had married, delighted and charmed one-half our town and were puritanically deplored of the other!"

And so, quite naturally, when an adventurous and handsome young Englishman landed in New York, one day, with a letter of introduction from his father to Alston Van Brugh, the resident British consul strongly advised him not to present it.

"Or, at least, if you do, Lord Albert," was the added monition, "I should first suggest to you that you call upon Mr. Van Brugh's brother. He lives ever so far away, in a country-house on the banks of the East River. But you could easily be driven there, and you'd find him very agreeable. I perfectly recollect hearing of your father's visit to this country, long ago as it was. No wonder that he admired and liked Alston Van Brugh *then*. But a great change has come over him—a great sorrow has befallen him. Perhaps his brother, Marcus Van Brugh, will tell you all about it. In any case, I am sure he will give you the warmest of welcomes."

And Marcus Van Brugh did. He, too, had known the Marquis of Ellesmere, Lord Albert Winwood's father, and had greatly liked him. "Ever so far away, on the banks of the East River," meant a pretty cottage just about in the present locality of East Fourteenth Street. Lord Albert's host was a childless widower of about sixty, on whom his years sat lightly. He had never been a beau like his brother, but he was affable, fond of new faces, and, within somewhat simple limits, a cordial entertainer.

"So you came over just for the big voyage," he said to his guest, "being a devoted lover of sea-faring? Deuced long and tedious you must have found your trip. But now you are here, you should not dream of rushing back so soon as within a fortnight. I've grown to be a good deal of a recluse, though not in the least a misanthropic one. I know everybody in town who's worth knowing, and I mean to go there and stop at one of the hotels and bring you about."

This was no idle promise. For a week Marcus Van Brugh devoted himself to showing Lord Albert the town, as he called it, and a very placid and harmless sort of town it seemed to this young Briton, fresh from all the pomps and pleasures of gigantic London. But Lord Albert, then in his four-and-twentieth year, was far from being spoiled either by his rank or previous encompassments. A certain boyish frankness and gentleness in him completely won his new elderly friend. And soon Marcus Van Brugh became quite confidential to him regarding the strangely secluded owner of the Beaver Street abode.

"I rarely see Alston, now. It pains me greatly to see him. The cause of his terrible depression is well known. I will tell it you. Eighteen years ago, while he and his wife were the most envied pair in New York, and just two years after your father met them here, Mrs. Alston Van Brugh became secretly infatuated with a certain Spanish nobleman (a man of unquestioned rank and distinction), who had chanced to visit these shores. One day she fled with him to Spain, Europe, the end of the world—Heaven knows where."

"Ah," murmured Lord Albert, "that was most unfortunate!"

"It was hideous, ghastly. But her abandonment of her little infant daughter made it more so."

"Indeed, yes!"

"The child is now, of course, a grown up girl, and yet my brother never sees her except once a year. This is on Christmas day, which happens to be the day he received that fatal news. Our only sister, Mrs. Apthorpe, is Wanda's constant guardian and companion. Wanda—it's a pretty name, isn't it? My brother had been reading some German romance or poem, or something like that, when the child was born. Ah! if you could have seen him then, just as your father saw him! I want you to meet my sister, Mrs. Apthorpe. I'm sure you will like her. She's a serious woman, and a bit grim, but she has a vein of

humor running like a golden thread through her temperament. You'll like her, I know."

Lord Albert smiled, pulling at his downy blond whiskers. "And shall I like Miss Wanda, too?" he asked.

Marcus Van Brugh's kindly face saddened below its rather complex wrinkles. "Like her? yes. You couldn't help it, she's



so gentle and maidenly and dove-eyed. Ah, she's a little beauty is Wanda Van Brugh. . . But alas! . . . I may as well tell it, I suppose—why not?" and the old widower's cheery hazel eyes visibly moistened.

"The truth is, she's deaf and dumb."

"How dreadfully sad!" exclaimed Lord Albert.

But he did not find it so sad when he had seen Wanda. She struck him as the sweetest of damsels, and her tender gray eyes had for him a magic trick of speech that subtly if not fully compensated for the muteness of her demure, roseleaf lips.

Mrs. Althorpe lived in a Colonial-looking wooden homestead, left her by her late husband, who had been a famed and prosperous lawyer in his day. The building, with its pretty lawns and gardens (though now the time of year was wintry and verged upon Christmas), faced the new canal, which had been made by draining the marshes of that region and also the Collect Pond, formerly a pleasure-haunt in all seasons. On either side the smooth-edged current of water were banks green in summer with double rows of shade-trees. Opposite this thoroughfare, which was then as now called Canal Street, and which bears at the present day no possible semblance of its former rural picturesqueness, Mrs. Apthorpe had dwelt since the infancy of her sweet young protégée. She had never been a woman of society, and she had chosen to let few of her small circle of friends catch more than a glimpse of Wanda. A very accomplished and even erudite lady, named Mrs. Beale, had lived with her for certainly fifteen years. And it was generally understood that Mrs. Beale had had large previous experience in the rearing and training of deaf mutes.

The Apthorpe abode was called Poplar House, because of two poplar trees that sentineled its porch. Lord Albert's visit here was hailed most hospitably by its proprietress.

"My brother, Marcus," she said, "must not claim too large a monopoly of acquaintanceship with your delightful father. I, too, knew him well, and I shall never forget the exquisite tact and high-breeding which he showed to all us Americans, coming here, as he did, at a time when the Republic was in its earliest youth, and when prejudice, born of such recent unhappy conflict, might easily have misconstrued even some unguarded courtesy."

Lord Albert soon paid another visit to Poplar House, and with unerring keenness Mrs. Apthorpe detected its motive. After he had come and gone the second time, she said, while closeted with her cherished friend, Mrs. Beale:

"Have you noticed, Augusta, how our Wanda seems to fascinate him?"

Mrs. Beale nodded. She had a plump, genial face, in strong contrast with her friend's firm and sedate one.

"Of course I've noticed, Ellen. *Isn't* it strange?"

"Strange? Oh, I don't know. I've sometimes thought that the thing men cared least for in women was their power of speech."

"Lady Albert Winwood!" smiled Mrs. Beale. "What a

fine sound it has! He'll never be the Marquis, though, will he?"

"No. He's the second son by a second marriage. His brother, the Earl of Carrollford, is ever so much older than he, and has been married ever so long, and has a large family—chiefly sons, I think he said."

"Too bad, now, isn't it?"

"No. He's charming, and has twelve thousand pounds a year in his own right. He told me so yesterday, in his nice,



simple, candid way. It would be a superb match for Wanda. The canal is frozen as hard as iron, and he's fond of skating, and I told him Wanda could skate beautifully. So he's coming over to-morrow morning at eleven to skate with her. He's crazy to take lessons in the deaf-and-dumb language, too, and I've promised that I'll teach him."

Mrs. Aphorpe kept this promise, and though the young Englishman's infatuation gave her little time for tuition, his cleverness as a pupil surprised her. Not once, but several times, did he skate with Wanda. They made, indeed, a comely couple, gliding together with joined hands and frost-flushed faces over that bluish-green strip of ice, where now cars jingle and carts

rattle, and all kinds of traffic bustle and haggle, and not a gleam remains of the old meadowy quietude and peace!

Mrs. Apthorpe and Mrs. Beale would watch them from one



of the upper windows of Poplar House. "What a strange wooing," at length said Wanda's aunt, "if wooing indeed it is."

One day, at about dusk, and on Christmas-eve, Wanda hurried into the presence of her aunt, who had just returned from the kitchen—where ladies of that period went oftener than ladies of this, and were not in the least ashamed of going, either. She had told Lord Albert, who was to dine with them at two o'clock on the morrow, that she would give him as fine a plum pudding as any that he had ever eaten at home in his own land, renowned though it was for this same viand. Wanda went straight up to her. She held her skates dangling by a strap from one hand. With the other hand she caught her aunt's arm. Silver lights were flashing from her gray eyes, and her cheeks were a brilliant rose.

"Oh, Aunt Ellen," cried the deaf and dumb girl, "I—I spoke!"

"Well," returned Mrs. Apthorpe, composedly, "I was sure you would, sooner or later. Calm yourself, dear. There; let

me take off your things. How did it happen? He said something *very* sweet, I suppose."

"Oh, he—he talked to *himself* about me, right out loud! It was *too* trying!"

"I should think it might have been. What did he say? Stop crying, and tell me right out loud."

"Oh, that I was the sweetest girl he'd ever met, and that if only I were not deaf and dumb he'd beg me to marry him, and



when I'd said 'Yes' he'd write instantly to his father in England, and tell him that he was going to bring over the fairest bride in all Christendom. He kept on saying things like this, till at last I—well, I couldn't stand it any more, and I didn't."

Mrs. Apthorpe kissed the girl's cold, damask, tear-stained cheek. "You found a tongue, darling, and I don't blame you."

"But you have always so implored, insisted, commanded, Aunt Ellen——"

"Yes; never mind that; I plead guilty, dearest. And what did *he* say?"

"Say?" shuddered Wanda. "Oh, he turned white and gnawed his lips, and muttered that he'd been made a fool of."

"So he has. Poor Lord Albert! where is he now?"

"I *think* he followed me. I dare say he's downstairs. He grumbled something about seeing you and having it out with you."

"He was quite right. We *will* have it out together, if he is downstairs."

Lord Albert was. . . . Five minutes later Mrs. Apthorpe sat beside him, on the prim hair-cloth parlor sofa, in the winter twilight of Christmas-eve.

"You're angry, of course," she began. "But I believe your heart will soften when I've told you the real story of Wanda's life. A few people know she isn't deaf and dumb, but not many, when all are named. I've lived so quietly out here ever since my husband died, and that was before she was born. My brother, Marcus, never knew, and I shrank from telling him. He's a dear fellow, but then he's a gossip, and I fear he'd part with a secret as quickly as a fool parts with his money."

Then the speaker, in a few vivid words, referred to the great bereavement which had wrecked her brother Alston's life. . . . "When I went to Wanda's father, after the blow had fallen on him," she pursued, "I felt almost sure that he would soon become mad. His loathing of little Wanda was so great that he terrified me half to death by saying that he had an impulse to kill the poor innocent babe. . . . Then his mood grew sullen. Oh, no; the child should live, and should be his living vengeance as well! When I heard him speak like that I grew faint and sick. I stayed with him for days and did my best to brighten his awful gloom. Then at last I found that my presence was useless, and that he wanted to be alone with his morbid thoughts, and that a certain hideous resolve regarding Wanda was growing firmer each day. He had determined (think of it!) that she should never even be taught to speak! And when she had reached full womanhood, he meant to take her to her mother and says "Here is the child you deserted. She is so ignorant that she does not know her name, but at least she is powerless to utter lies."

"How distressing!"

"Oh, it was agonizing! I longed so to get the little one away

from his custody that I would have faced almost any peril for such an object. Perhaps, woman-like, when force failed me I fell back on deceit. Anyway, I got little Wanda. Some people would say that I got her by perjuring myself. But if ever the end justified the means I believe it did so then. I told Alston that I would faithfully promise to bring the child up just as he so vengefully desired. He looked me in the eyes, and shook his head, and doubted me. All his old, sweet, sunny nature had vanished. I could scarcely recognize him as he was. I have never been able to recognize him since. His sorrow and his shame have petrified him. . . . At last he said to me that if I would give him my sacred oath to carry out his wish, and that if I would bring him Wanda each Christmas day as proof that I *was* carrying it out, he would place the child in my charge."

Here Mrs. Apthorpe's lips quivered, then tightened. With a sudden, wistful, pathetic smile she exclaimed :

"I gave my sacred oath, and I got the child. I broke my oath, but I saved Wanda from the forlornest fate. Was I not right? Are there not times when even perjury ceases to be a sin?"

Lord Albert rose from his chair, and took one of the lady's delicate, faded hands, and touched it with his lips. This was the young man's answer.

"Thanks," Mrs. Apthorpe faltered. Then, after a moment : "Well, his hardness did not soften. I brought him the child each Christmas afternoon till she was five years old. She was shy, and I knew that all his questionings could not wring a word from her. On the Christmas day when she was six years old I felt terribly frightened, for she was now growing very bright and talkative with those whom she knew, and though I had told her not to say a single word, I still trembled with dread that she would burst into a loquacious little monologue. But no; her shyness still befriended me. On the next Christmas day, when she had turned seven, I felt so doubtful of her that I went alone to my brother, there in that dreary, darkened house which had once brimmed with hospitality, bubbled with mirth. I told him that Wanda was ill—too ill for me to bring her that day. He believed me, after a long look straight into my eyes, which I tried to make the soul of sincerity and truth. 'I hope she will not die,' he answered, the words ending a long pause; 'I want her to live, you know . . . I want her to live.' . . . When the next Christmas came I brought her; she was eight, then, and wise for

her years. She knew her part and played it. . . Since that day I have had no fear. And to-morrow——”

Here Mrs. Apthorpe stopped short. She searched the manful, amiable face of her guest, but her lips had grown silent.

“Well,” suddenly exclaimed Lord Albert, “pray, what about to-morrow?”

Mrs. Apthorpe drooped her eyes, then slowly raised them.

“Of course Wanda *heard* you when you—when you spoke to yourself there on the canal, while you and she skated together. But she doesn’t *hold* you to it—nor should I dream of doing so. What anyone says to himself isn’t . . . oh, how *shall* I express it? . . . isn’t binding, you understand!”

“By Jove, it’s binding, as you call it, dear lady, with me!” exclaimed Lord Albert, again rising. “I want to marry your niece, and I’m my own master, and the ship that bears me back to England will either take on her passenger list one of the wretchedest bachelors or the happiest of Benedicts!”

Mrs. Apthorpe jumped up from the hair-cloth sofa with a young girl’s agility. She threw both arms around Lord Albert’s neck, and gave him, on one of his fresh-tinted English cheeks, a resounding kiss.

“God bless you!” she cried, her voice breaking. “Don’t feel shocked; I’m old enough to be your mother.” . . .

By about three o’clock the next afternoon Alston Van Brugh went into his dim front drawing-room and seated himself in a certain silken, beflowered easy-chair. The whole apartment breathed of a piteous, antiquated splendor. Nothing had been changed there since the coming of that calamity which had soured and stunned and shattered him. Time had wrought sorry changes in this once modish chamber. Two or three trusted servants had done their best with it, but they had not been able to save its aspect from the ravages of desuetude and decay.



Here Alston Van Brugh waited, as he had done for so many years past. This was the last Christmas day, he had decided, on which Ellen Apthorpe should bring to him the child whose future she had solemnly sworn to wrong and wreck. He had kept himself fairly well posted as to the whereabouts of his wife. He knew just in what European city to find her. When Mrs. Apthorpe came he had determined to tell her that her services were now ended, and that he and Wanda would soon start for Europe, though she might accompany them if so inclined.

Grief sometimes makes us insane, and there is slight doubt that Mrs. Apthorpe's fear lest her brother might become a madman when the horror of his wife's desertion first broke on him, was in no sense idle apprehension. Alston Van Brugh had for years been a monomaniac; he had indeed gone mad under his affliction. His trust that a virtuous and high-minded woman like his sister would both take that odious oath and keep it, was one proof of his mordant malady, so subtle, desolating and continuous.

Drawing out, half mechanically, the big, heavy watch whose gold fob gleamed below his long waistcoat, he looked at the hour. "It's their time," he murmured aloud, not knowing his words were audible.

Mrs. Apthorpe arrived soon after this, but she entered the chamber alone. Her brother did not rise; he sat quite still, except for a faint nod, while she seated herself at his side. He had forgotten every vestige of his old courtly suavity.

"Where's the girl?" he sharply questioned, looking past her toward the rear of the room, obscure in the early winter dusk.

"You may see her later, if you wish, Alston, but not now."

"She came with you?"

His sister ignored this question. "Alston, have you heard the news about . . . your wife?" she asked.

His brows clouded. "News?" he said, gruffly. "What news?"

"I had a letter, three days ago, from my old friend, Mrs. Garnett, who lives in Dresden. Emily lived there, too. I say 'lived,' Alston, for she died there, somewhat suddenly, a month ago."

He turned livid. "Where's your letter?" And he stretched out one trembling hand.

Mrs. Apthorpe, who had it with her, eagerly produced and gave it him.

He bent over it in silence; the light of a near window streamed on its pages.

His eyes were wild and fierce as he turned them on his sister.

"So . . . the plan and hope of years must perish like this!"

Mrs. Apthorpe rose and went quite close to him. "Yes, Alston. We both understand. You can never wreak your vengeance on her now. She's past all that."

He shook his head woefully from side to side. "Past all that," he repeated, "past all that!"

"And poor Wanda, Alston? Are you not sorry that *she* should be the victim of this unhappy and unholy plot?"

He did not answer. His gaze drooped, and he sat quite moveless and silent.

"You remember my oath to you, Alston?"

Suddenly he lifted his head and replied with a sorrowful stare: "Oh, yes, I remember it. The girl must be the only sufferer—that's all. God help her!"

Mrs. Apthorpe, standing beside him, let one hand fall on his shoulder.

"Alston," she said, "I have come here to tell you that I lied to you."

"Lied . . . to . . . me? You?" He slowly rose.

"Yes. I took the child; you've often seen her since. It is not true that she is what you have believed her. I thought your wrath might be terrible when I told you (as I'm telling you now) that rather than have you visit upon her so severe, so undeserved a fate, I had steeped myself in falsehood, perjury, dishonor—what you please. For this reason, Alston, I came to you alone. Wanda is saved. If in your anger you choose to kill me, your child shall at least be spared."

He drew nearer to her. She unflinchingly met his gaze in its arraigning sombreness.

"You . . . betrayed me like this?"

"I stood between you and the commission of a crime."

She saw his hands clench themselves. "What had that woman done to me? Pray, was *her* act a crime?"

"One crime does not excuse another. . . . And fate, destiny, God, Alston—whatever you choose to call the power—has swept from you all means of actualizing your design. Even if I *had* kept faith with you, Emily's death, as it now happens, would have left poor Wanda cursed for all her coming life."

He sank back into his chair. His face had got a deathly pallor, and his eyes were filled with a wandering blankness.

"Will you not let her come to you, Alston?" his sister softly pleaded. "She is here, and she is here with one who loves her. He will tell you who he is. It will be a great match for her. You have heard of nothing—you have wrapped yourself in constant solitude; otherwise you would have known of his presence here in town—you would have known, Alston, that he is the son of an old friend and admirer—a friend of those sunnier, humaner days . . . *Alston!*"



The last word left her lips in a plaintive shriek. Wanda and Lord Albert heard it, and hurried together through the doorway near which they stood. But already his head had fallen forward, his limbs had relaxed, and, the next instant, while a long, deep, fluttering sigh sounded from his lips, he sank helpless on the floor.

Even by the time they had all three gathered about him and raised him, he had ceased to live. Afterward, when a noted physician reported scientifically on the cause of his death, the announcement came that it was a wonder he had lived for so many years, and that nothing could have sustained the meagre vitality of brain and heart except some rigid purpose, some ever-haunting illusion, born either from savage prejudice or confirmed dementia.

But to Wanda and her lover this grim, abrupt event could not possibly prove more than a transient blot upon the new-thrilling happiness of their Christmas-tide. Naturally, for Mrs. Apthorpe the case was different. She had had her sense of relief, it is true, but also her memories of struggle, anxiety, and dread. Still, to think what droll romanticism must always memorially cling about

the wooing of her loved Wanda, sent a sun-ray amid her gloomiest musings, while to picture this dear ward as happily and brilliantly wedded was to feel the future flush and sparkle with a joy victorious yet tender.

"Only," she said to her niece, "you mustn't put the ocean between us. And by 'us,' dear, I mean Mrs. Beale as well as myself. We'll take a little house in Richmond, or Windsor, or Twickenham, or some place like that; and no matter what London grandeurs may surround you, I'm sure you'll remember us with a visit now and then, even if it's merely an hour or so long."

Wanda kissed her aunt. "I would not sail," she said, "unless you both sailed sooner or later. Nor would Albert," she added, "knowing all that you both have been to me, dream of wishing otherwise!"





ST. ANTHONY AND HIS PIG *

BY PAUL ARÈNE



T. ANTHONY pushed open the door and saw in his cabin half-a-dozen little children who had come up from the village, in spite of the storm, to bring him some honey and nuts, dainties which the good hermit allowed himself to enjoy once a year, on Christmas day, on account of his great age.

"Sit around the fire, friends, and throw on two or three pine knots to make a blaze. That's right. Now make room for Barrabas; poor, faithful Barrabas, who is so cold that his tail is all out of curl."

The children coughed and wiped their noses, and Barrabas—for that is the real name of St. Anthony's pig—Barrabas grunted, with his feet comfortably buried in the warm ashes.

The Saint threw back his hood, shook the snow from his shoulders, passed his hand over his long gray beard, all hung with little icicles, and having seated himself, began :

"So you want me to tell you about my temptation?"

"Yes, good St. Anthony; yes, kind St. Anthony."

"My temptation? But you know as much as I do about my temptation. It has been drawn and painted a thousand times, and you can see on my wall—God forgive me this piece of vanity—all the *prints*, old and new, dedicated to my glory and that of Barrabas; from Épinal's sketch which costs a sou including the song, to the admirable masterpieces of Teniers, Breughel and Callot.

* Translated by Mrs. J. M. Lancaster, from the French, for Short Stories—Copyrighted.

"I am sure your mothers must have taken you to the Marionette Theatre at Luxembourg, to see my poor hermitage, just as it is here, with the chapel, the cabin, the bell hanging in the crotch of a tree, and myself at prayer, while Proserpine offers me a cup, and a host of little devils dancing at the end of a string are tormenting and terrifying poor Barrabas.

"After a while, when you have learned to read, you will see behind the glass doors of your father's book-case these words:

"*'The Temptation of St. Anthony,'* by Gustave Flaubert, in letters of gold on the back of a handsome book.

"This M. Flaubert is a clever fellow, though he does not write for little children like you, and what he says about me is all very true. The artists, of whom I spoke to you just now, have not omitted any of the devils which have tormented me at different times; in fact, they have added a few.

"That is the reason, my children, that I am afraid I should weary you if I should tell you again things that you already know so well."

"Oh, St. Anthony! oh, good St. Anthony!"

"Let me tell you something else——"

"No, no; the temptation, the temptation!"

"Well, well," said St. Anthony, "I see that I shall not escape the temptation this year; but as you have been unusually good, I will tell you about one which no artist has ever painted, and which M. Flaubert knows nothing about. Nevertheless it was a terrible temptation; was it not, Barrabas? and kept me a long time on the slope at whose foot the fires of hell are glowing.

"It was at midnight, just such a night as this, that the thing occurred."

At this beginning, Barrabas, evidently interested, raised himself on his two front feet to listen, the children shivered and drew closer together, and here is the Christmas story which the good Saint told them:

"Well, my friends, I must tell you that after a thousand successive temptations, the devils, all at once, stopped tormenting me. My nights were once more peaceful. No more monsters with horns and tails, carrying me through the air on their bat's wings; no more devil's imps with he-goat's beards and monkey faces; no more infernal musicians trying to frighten Barrabas, with their stomachs made of a double-bass, and great noses

which sounded like an unearthly clarinet; no more Queen Proserpines in robes of gold and precious stones, graceful and majestic.

"And I said to myself, 'All's well, Anthony; the devils are discouraged.' Barrabas and I were as happy as we could be, on our rock.

"Barrabas followed me about everywhere, delighting me with his childish gayety. As for me, I did what all good hermits do. I prayed, I rang my bell at the proper times, and between my prayers and offices, I drew water from the spring for the vegetables in my garden.

"This lasted six months or more; six delightful months of solitude.

"I slept in perfect security, but unhappily the Evil One was still awake.

"One day, near Christmas time, I was about to sun myself in my doorway, when a man presented himself. He wore hobnailed shoes and a square-cut velvet coat, and carried on his back a peddler's pack.

"He called out :

" 'Spits, spits, spits! Buy some spits!' with a slight Auvergnese accent.

" 'Do you want a spit, good hermit?'

" 'Go your way, my good man. I live on cold water and roots and have no use for your spits.'

" 'All right, all right. I am only trying to sell my wares.'

" 'However,' added he, with a fiendish glance at Barrabas, who, more sagacious than I, was grunting furiously in a corner, "however, that fellow there looks so fat and sleek, that I thought—God forgive me! that you might be keeping him for your Christmas-eve supper.'

"The fact was that Barrabas, the rascal, had grown very fat, now that the devils no longer troubled his digestion.

"I suddenly became aware of this fact, but was far enough from any thought of feasting upon my only friend, so when I saw the peddler go down the path, spit in hand, I could not help laughing at the idea. Little by little, however, like the growth of a noxious weed, the infernal idea—for it was evidently a devil from hell disguised as a peddler, who had tried to sell me the spit—this infernal idea of eating Barrabas took root in my mind; I saw spits; I dreamed of spits. In vain I increased my mortifications and penances. Penance and mortifications

availed nothing, and fasting—fasting only seemed to sharpen my appetite.

"I avoided looking at Barrabas. I no longer dared take him with me on my expeditions, and when, at my return, he ran to rub the rough bristles on his back against my bare feet, I turned away my eyes right quickly and had not the heart to caress him.

"But I am afraid, children, that this does not interest you much and perhaps you would prefer——"

"No, good St. Anthony!"

"Go on, kind St. Anthony!"

"Well, then I will go on, however painful it may be to me to recall those terrible memories. What temptations! what trials! The devil often makes use of the most innocent things to lead a man astray.

"Near my hermitage there was a little wood (I think there are still a few trees there) where some good people had given me permission to take Barrabas to eat acorns.

"It was our favorite walk at sunset, when the oak leaves smell so good.

"I read, while Barrabas gorged himself with acorns, and often while he rooted about in the damp leaves, he turned up rough looking black balls, which smelt very nice indeed, and these he ate greedily."

"Perhaps they were truffles, good St. Anthony."

"Yes, my little friend, truffles; a cryptogamous plant which I had scorned till that time, but whose odor struck me all at once as very delicious and appetizing.

"So that from that moment every time that Barrabas dug up a truffle, I made him drop it by hitting him a sharp blow on the snout with a stick, and then—wretched hypocrite that I was—threw him a chestnut or two so that he might not become discouraged."

"Oh, St. Anthony!"

"In that way I collected several pounds——"

"And you were going to cook Barrabas' feet with truffles?"

"Well, I had not altogether decided to do so, but I acknowledge I was thinking about it.

"Beside my door," continued the hermit, "a seed brought by the wind had sprouted and grown up between the rock and the wall. Its long leaves of a grayish green smelt very nice, and in the spring the bees came to steal honey from its little purple flowers. I loved this modest plant, which seemed to grow for me

alone. I watered it. I cared for it. I put a little earth about its roots.

"But, alas, one morning as I broke off a little sprig and smelt of it, I had a sudden and tempting vision of quarters of pork roasting on a spit, deluging with their golden gravy bits of an herb thrust into the meat and shriveling and curling in the heat of the fire. My plant, my modest little plant, was the sage so dear to cooks, and its savory odor thenceforth called to mind only images of spare ribs and roast pig. Ashamed of myself, I pulled up my sage, and gave all the truffles at once to Barrabas, who had a grand feast on them.

"But I was not to get off so cheaply. The sage pulled up, the truffles thrown away, my temptation still continued.

"They became more frequent, more irresistible as Christmas time approached.

"Put yourselves in my place: with a robust stomach, for years poorly nourished with roots and cold water, what I saw pass at the foot of my rock, on the high road which leads to the city, was well fitted to ruin a holier man than I. What a procession, my friends! The country people—good Christians as they were—were preparing for the Christmas-eve feast a week beforehand, and from morn till night nothing went by but eatables. Carts full of deer and wild boars, nets full of lobsters, hampers full of fish and oysters; cocks and hens hanging by their feet under the wagons; fat sheep going to the



slaughter-house; ducks and pheasants; a flock of squawking geese; turkeys shaking their crimson wattles; not to mention the good country women carrying baskets full of fruit ripened on straw, bunches of grapes, and white winter melons; eggs and milk for custards and creams; honey in the comb and in jars; cheeses and dried figs.

"And, greatest temptation of all, the despairing cries of some poor pig, tied by the leg and dragged squealing along.

"At last Christmas came. The midnight mass over at the hermitage, and everybody gone, I locked the chapel and shut myself up quickly in my hut.

It was cold: as cold as it is to-day. The north wind blew and the fields and roads were covered with snow. I heard laughing and singing outside. It was some of my parishioners who were going to eat their Christmas-eve feast in the neighborhood. I looked through the hole in my shutter. Here and there over the white plain the bright fires shone out from the farmhouse windows, and down below the illuminated city sent up a glow to heaven, like the reflection from a great furnace. Then I called to mind the Christmas-eve feasts of my gormandizing youth. My grandfather presiding at the table, and christening with new wine the great back-log. I saw the smoking dishes, the white tablecloth, the firelight dancing on the pewter pots and platters on the dresser; and at the thought of myself alone with Barrabas, when all the world was feasting, sitting before a miserable fire, with a jug of water and a wretched root, a sudden sadness seized me. I cried, 'What a Christmas feast,' and burst into tears.

"The tempter was only waiting for this moment.

"For the last few minutes the silence of the night had been broken by the sound of invisible wings. Then came a shout of laughter, and a series of discreet little knocks on door and shutter.

"'The devils! hide, hide, Barrabas!' cried I; and Barrabas, who had good reason to hate all sorts of devilish tricks, took refuge behind the kneading-trough.

"The slates on my roof rattled as if it were hailing. The infernal gang was once more let loose about my head.

"But now we come to the strangest thing. Instead of the terrific noises and discords by which my enemies generally announced their coming,—cries of foul night-birds, bleating of he-goats, rattling of bones, and clanking of iron chains,—this time they were low sounds; at first quite vague, like those which the chilly traveller hears from out an inn whose doors are closed, and which, growing more and more distant, resolve themselves into a marvelous music of turning of spits, stirring of saucepans, clinking of glasses, emptying of bottles, rattling of forks and plates, and sizzling of frying-pans.

"All at once the music ceased. The walls of my cabin trembled, the shutter blew open, the door slammed back, and the wind, rushing in, put out my lamp.

"I expected to smell brimstone and sulphur. But, no! not at all! This time the infernal wind was laden with pleasant odors of burnt sugar and cinnamon. My cabin smelt very sweet.

"Just then I heard a squeal from Barrabas. They had found out his hiding-place.

"'Come, come,' said I, 'the old jokes are beginning again. They are going to tie fireworks on his tail once more.' These devils have not much invention. And forgetting myself, I prayed Heaven to grant my companion strength to bear the trial. But as he cried louder and louder, I ventured to open my eyes, and my lamp being suddenly relighted, I saw the unfortunate martyr held fast by his tail and his ears, and struggling for dear life, surrounded by white devils."

"White devils! Good St. Anthony!"

"Yes, my friends, white devils. The very whitest of the white, I assure you, disguised as they were as scullions and pot-boys, in short jackets and caps. They brandished larding needles and pranced about with dripping-pans.

"However, in the middle of the room they had placed a long board on two trestles, and on this they stretched Barrabas. Near the board was a big knife, a pail, a little broom, and a sponge. Barrabas squealed, and I knew that they were about to cut his throat.

"What a soul-destroying thing is gluttony! While the blood was running and Barrabas was still squealing, my soul was greatly disquieted. But Barrabas once silent—'Bah,' said I to myself, 'since he is dead——' and with guilty coolness and even with a certain interest, I looked at Barrabas in the hands of the assassins. The innocent Barrabas, the dear companion of my solitude, cruelly torn to pieces and marvelously transformed into a multitude of savory things.

"I saw him cut open, cleaned and scraped, hung by the feet along a ladder, washed as white as a lily, and smelling very good already in the steam of the boiling water; then cut, chopped, salted, made into sausages, pâté meat, all with diabolical rapidity; so that in a twinkling my hearthstone was covered with a bed of live coals (the devils are never at a loss for anything). I was surrounded by steaming kettles, gridirons, and spits, where, amid perfumes as fragrant as ambergris, in gravies and sauces ruddy as gold, bubbled, sizzled, fried, boiled,—and that, I confess, to my great joy and satisfaction,—the remains of him who was my friend, now transformed into pork.

"All of a sudden everything changes. What a spectacle! A palace instead of a cabin; no more cooking and no more live coals. The broken walls were hung with tapestry; the floor of beaten earth was covered with a carpet.

"Only the slates of the roof kept their places, but these were transformed into a wonderful vine trellis, and through their openings were seen the blue sky and the stars. I had already admired one like it at the house of a rich man in the city, where I had preached repentance for sin. And through these openings ascended and descended a host of little scullions carrying dishes, catching on by the brittle vine twigs, sliding down the branches and covering a table beside me with meats done to a turn.

"There was everything on that table. Ah! my friends, my mouth waters at the thought— Stop, what was I going to say? No; at the very thought of it, my heart is full of remorse. Four hams, two big and two little; four truffled feet; only one head, but stuffed so full of pistachio nuts; steaks; galantines blushing through their mantle of quivering amber jelly; dainty forcemeat balls; twisted sausages; puddings black as hell.

"Then the roasts; the hashes; the sauces; and I, with staring eyes and dilated nostrils, wondered that so many savory things could be contained under the bristles of a humble animal, and my heart ached at the thought of poor Barrabas."

"But did you eat any of him?"

"Almost. I almost ate some, my friends. I had already stuck my fork into the crackling skin of a black blood-pudding, offered me by a very polite little devil. The fork was in; the devil smiled.

"‘Get thee behind me, get thee behind me!’ cried I. I had just recognized the smile of the diabolical little peddler, the cause of all my temptations, who two months before had tried to sell me a spit. ‘Get thee behind me, Satan!’

"The vision fled: it was daybreak and my fire had just gone out. Barrabas, well and happy, shook himself and rang the little bell about his neck, and instead of a host of white devils, snow-flakes as big as your fist whirled in the door and window, which the storm had burst open."

"And what next?" said the children, eager for more of the beautiful story.

"Next, my dear friends, with a heart full of penitence, I shared my meal of roots with Barrabas, and since then no more devils have ever come to disturb our Christmas-eve feast."

A THREE-VOLUME NOVEL *

BY ANTHONY HOPE

Author of "The Prisoner of Zenda," etc.



IT was, I believe, mainly as a compliment to me that Miss Audrey Liston was asked to Poltons. Miss Liston and I were very good friends, and my cousin Dora Polton thought, as she informed me, that it would be nice for me to have some one I could talk to about "books and so on." I did not complain. Miss Liston was a pleasant young woman of six-and-twenty; I liked her very much except on paper, and I was aware that she made it a point of duty to read something at least of what I wrote. She was in the habit of describing herself as an "authoress in a small way"; if it were pointed out that six three-volume novels in three years (the term of her literary activity, at the time of which I write) could hardly be called "a small way," she would smile modestly and say that it was not really much; and if she were told that the English language embraced no such word as "authoress," she would smile again and say that it ought to, a position towards the bugbear of correctness with which, I confess, I sympathize in some degree. She was very diligent; she worked from ten to one every day while she was at Poltons; how much she wrote is between her and her conscience.

There was another impeachment which Miss Liston was hardly at the trouble to deny. "Take my characters from life!" she would exclaim. "Surely every artist" (Miss Liston often referred to herself as an artist) "must." And she would proceed to maintain—what is perhaps true sometimes—that people rather liked being put into books, just as they liked being photographed, for all that they grumble and pretend to be afflicted when either process is levied against them. In discussing this matter with Miss Liston I felt myself on delicate ground, for it was notorious

* A selection from "The English Illustrated Magazine."

that I figured in her first book in the guise of a misogynistic genius; the fact that she lengthened (and thickened) my hair, converted it from an indeterminate brown to a dusky black, gave me a drooping mustache, and invested my very ordinary work-a-day eyes with a strange magnetic attraction, availed nothing; I was at once recognized, and, I may remark in passing, an uncommonly disagreeable fellow she made me. Thus I had passed through the fire. I felt tolerably sure that I presented no other aspect of interest, real or supposed, and I was quite content that Miss Liston should serve all the rest of her acquaintance as she had served me. I reckoned they would last her, at the present rate of production, about five years.

Fate was kind to Miss Liston, and provided her with most suitable patterns for her next piece of work at Poltons itself. There were a young man and a young woman staying in the house—Sir Gilbert Chillington and Miss Pamela Myles. The moment Miss Liston was apprised of a possible romance, she began the study of the protagonists. She was looking out, she told me, for some new types (if it were any consolation—and there is a sort of dignity about it—to be called a type, Miss Liston's victims were always welcome to so much), and she had found them in Chillington and Pamela. The former appeared to my dull eye to offer no salient novelty; he was tall, broad, handsome, and he possessed a manner of enviable placidity. Pamela, I allowed, was exactly the heroine Miss Liston loved, haughty, capricious, *difficile*, but sound and true at heart (I was mentally skimming Volume I.). Miss Liston agreed with me in my conception of Pamela, but declared that I did not do justice to the artistic possibilities latent in Chillington; he had a curious attraction which it would tax her skill (so she gravely informed me) to the utmost to reproduce. She proposed that I also should make a study of him, and attributed my hurried refusal to a shrinking from the difficulties of the task.

"Of course," she observed, looking at our young friends who were talking nonsense at the other side of the lawn, "they must have a misunderstanding."

"Why, of course," said I, lighting my pipe. "What should you say to another man?"

"Or another woman?" said Miss Liston.

"It comes to the same thing," said I. (About a volume and a half I meant.)

"But it's more interesting. Do you think she'd better be

a married woman?" And Miss Liston looked at me inquiringly.

"The age prefers them married," I remarked.

This conversation happened on the second day of Miss Liston's visit, and she lost no time in beginning to study her subjects. Pamela, she said, she found pretty plain sailing, but Chillington continued to puzzle her. Again, she could not make up her mind whether to have a happy or a tragic ending. In the interests of a tender-hearted public, I pleaded for marriage-bells.

"Yes, I think so," said Miss Liston, but she sighed, and I think she had an idea or two for a heart-broken separation, followed by mutual, lifelong, hopeless devotion.

The complexity of young Sir Gilbert did not, in Miss Liston's opinion, appear less on further acquaintance; and indeed, I must admit that she was not altogether wrong in considering him worthy of attention. As I came to know him better, I discerned in him a smothered self-appreciation, which came to light in response to the least tribute of interest or admiration, but was yet far remote from the aggressiveness of a commonplace vanity. In a moment of indiscretion I had chaffed him—he was very good-natured—on the risks he ran at Miss Liston's hands; he was not disgusted, but neither did he plume himself or spread his feathers. He received the suggestion without surprise, and without any attempt at disclaiming fitness for the purpose; but he received it as a matter which entailed a responsibility on him. I detected the conviction that, if the portrait was to be painted, it was due to the world that it should be well painted; the subject must give the artist full opportunities.

"What does she know about me?" he asked in meditative tones.

"She's very quick; she'll soon pick up as much as she wants," I assured him.

"She'll probably go all wrong," he said sombrely; and of course I could not tell him that it was of no consequence if she did. He would not have believed me, and would have done precisely what he proceeded to do, and that was to afford Miss Liston every chance of appraising his character and plumbing the depths of his soul. I may say at once that I did not regret this course of action; for the effect of it was to allow me a chance of talking to Pamela Myles, and Pamela was exactly the sort of girl to beguile the long pleasant morning hours of a holi-

day in the country. No one had told Pamela that she was going to be put in a book, and I don't think it would have made any difference had she been told. Pamela's attitude towards books was one of healthy scorn, confidently based on admitted ignorance. So we never spoke of them, and my cousin Dora consoled with me more than once on the way in which Miss Liston, false to the implied terms of her invitation, deserted me in favor of Sir Gilbert, and left me to the mercies of a frivolous girl. Pamela appeared to be as little aggrieved as I was. I imagined that she supposed that Chillington would ask her to marry him some day before very long, and I was sure she would accept him; but it was quite plain that, if Miss Liston persisted in making Pamela her heroine, she would have to supply from her own resources a large supplement of passion. Pamela was far too deficient in the commodity to be made anything of, without such reinforcement, even by an art more adept at making much out of nothing than Miss Liston's straightforward method could claim to be.

A week passed, and then, one Friday morning, a new light burst on me. Miss Liston came into the garden at eleven o'clock and sat down by me on the lawn. Chillington and Pamela had gone riding with the squire, Dora was visiting the poor. We were alone. The appearance of Miss Liston at this hour (usually sacred to the use of the pen), no less than her puzzled look, told me that an obstruction had occurred in the novel. Presently she let me know what it was.

"I'm thinking of altering the scheme of my story, Mr. Wynne," said she. "Have you ever noticed how sometimes a man thinks he's in love when he isn't really?"

"Such a case sometimes occurs," I acknowledged.

"Yes, and he doesn't find out his mistake——"

"Till they're married?"

"Sometimes, yes," she said, rather as though she were making an unwilling admission. "But sometimes he sees it before—when he meets somebody else."

"Very true," said I with a grave nod.

"The false can't stand against the real," pursued Miss Liston; and then she fell into a meditative silence. I stole a glance at her face; she was smiling. Was it in the pleasure of literary creation—an artistic ecstasy? I should have liked to answer yes, but I doubted it very much. Without pretending to Miss Liston's powers, I have the little subtlety that is needful to

show me that more than one kind of smile may be seen on the human face, and that there is one very different from others ; and, finally, that that one is not evoked, as a rule, merely by the evolution of the troublesome encumbrance in pretty writing, vulgarly called "a plot."

"If," pursued Miss Liston, "some one comes who can appreciate him and draw out what is best in him——"

"That's all very well," said I, "but what of the first girl?"

"Oh, she's—she can be made shallow, you know ; and I can put in a man for her. People needn't be much interested in her."

"Yes, you could manage in that way," said I, thinking how Pamela—I took the liberty of using her name for the shallow girl—would like such a treatment.

"She will really be valuable mainly as a foil," observed Miss Liston ; and she added generously, "I shall make her nice, you know, but shallow—not worthy of him."

"And what are you going to make the other girl like?" I asked.

Miss Liston started slightly ; also she colored very slightly, and she answered, looking away from me across the lawn :

"I haven't quite made up my mind yet, Mr. Wynne."

With the suspicion which this conversation aroused fresh in my mind, it was curious to hear Pamela laugh, as she said to me on the afternoon of the same day :

"Aren't Sir Gilbert and Audrey Liston funny? I tell you what, Mr. Wynne, I believe they're writing a novel together."

"Perhaps Chillington's giving her the materials for one," I suggested.

"I shouldn't think," observed Pamela in her dispassionate way, "that anything very interesting had ever happened to him."

"I thought you liked him," I remarked humbly.

"So I do. What's that got to do with it?" asked Pamela.

It was beyond question that Chillington enjoyed Miss Liston's society ; the interest she showed in him was incense to his nostrils. I used to overhear fragments of his ideas about himself which he was revealing in answer to her tactful inquiries. But neither was it doubtful that he had by any means lost his relish for Pamela's lighter talk ; in fact, he seemed to turn to her with some relief—perhaps it is refreshing to escape from self-analysis, even when the process is conducted in the pleasantest possible manner—and the hours which Miss Liston gave to work were devoted by Chillington to maintaining his cordial relations with

the lady whose comfortable and not over-tragical disposal was taxing Miss Liston's skill. For she had definitely decided all her plot—she told me so a few days later. It was all planned out; nay, the scene in which the truth as to his own feelings bursts on Sir Gilbert (I forget at the moment what name the novel gave him), was, I understood, actually written; the shallow girl was to experience nothing worse than a wound to her vanity; and was to turn with as much alacrity as decency allowed to the substitute whom Miss Liston had now provided. All this was poured into my sympathetic ear, and I say sympathetic in all sincerity; for, although I may occasionally treat Miss Liston's literary efforts with less than proper respect, she herself was my friend, and the conviction under which she was now living would, I knew, unless it were justified, bring her into much of that unhappiness in which one generally found her heroine plunged about the end of Volume II. The heroine generally got out all right, and the knowledge that she would enabled the reader to preserve cheerfulness. But would poor little Miss Liston get out? I was none too sure of it.

Suddenly a change came in the state of affairs. Pamela produced it. It must have struck her that the increasing intimacy of Miss Liston and Chillington might become something other than "funny." To put it briefly and metaphorically, she whistled her dog back to her heels. I am not skilled in understanding or describing the artifices of ladies; but even I saw the transformation in Pamela. She put forth her strength and put on her prettiest gowns; she refused to take her place in the see-saw of society, which Chillington had recently established for his pleasure. If he spent an hour with Miss Liston, Pamela would have nothing of him for a day; she met his attentions with scorn unless they were undivided. Chillington seemed at first puzzled; I believe that he never regarded his talks with Miss Liston in other than a business point of view, but directly he understood that Pamela claimed him, and that she was prepared, in case he did not obey her call, to establish a grievance against him, he lost no time in manifesting his obedience. A whole day passed in which, to my certain knowledge, he was not alone a moment with Miss Liston, and did not, save at the family meals, exchange a word with her. As he walked off with Pamela, Miss Liston's eyes followed him in wistful longing; she stole away upstairs and did not come down till five o'clock. Then, finding me strolling about with a cigarette, she joined me.

"Well, how goes the book?" I asked.

"I haven't done much to it just lately," she answered in a low voice. "I—it's—I don't quite know what to do with it."

"I thought you'd settled?"

"So I had, but—oh, don't let's talk about it, Mr. Wynne!"

But a moment later she went on talking about it.

"I don't know why I should make it end happily," she said.

"I'm sure life isn't always happy, is it?"

"Certainly not," I answered. "You mean your man might stick to the shallow girl after all?"

"Yes," I just heard her whisper.

"And be miserable afterwards?" I pursued.

"I don't know," said Miss Liston. "Perhaps he wouldn't."

"Then you must make him shallow himself."

"I can't do that," she said quickly. "Oh, how difficult it is!"

She may have meant merely the art of writing—when I cordially agree with her—but I think she meant also the way of the world—which does not make me withdraw my assent. I left her walking up and down in front of the drawing-room windows, a rather forlorn little figure, thrown into distinctness by the cold rays of the setting sun.

All was not over yet. That evening Chillington broke away. Led by vanity or interest, or friendliness, I know not which—tired maybe of paying court (the attitude in which Pamela kept him), and thinking it would be pleasant to play the other part for a while—after dinner he went straight to Miss Liston, talked to her while we had coffee on the terrace, and then walked about with her. Pamela sat by me; she was very silent; she did not appear to be angry, but her handsome mouth wore a resolute expression. Chillington and Miss Liston wandered on into the shrubbery, and did not come into sight again for nearly half an hour.

"I think it's cold," said Pamela in her cool, quiet tones. "And it's also, Mr. Wynne, rather slow. I shall go to bed."

I thought it a little impertinent of Pamela to attribute the "slowness" (which had undoubtedly existed) to me, so I took my revenge by saying, with an assumption of innocence purposely and obviously unreal—

"Oh, but won't you wait and bid Miss Liston and Chillington good-night?"

Pamela looked at me for a moment. I made bold to smile.

Pamela's face broke slowly into an answering smile.

"I don't know what you mean, Mr. Wynne," said she.

"No?" said I.

"No," said Pamela, and she turned away. But before she went she looked over her shoulder, and, still smiling, said, "Wish Miss Liston good-night for me, Mr. Wynne. Anything I have to say to Sir Gilbert will wait very well till to-morrow."

She had hardly gone in when the wanderers came out of the shrubbery and rejoined me. Chillington wore his usual passive look, but Miss Liston's face was happy and radiant. Chillington passed on into the drawing-room. Miss Liston lingered a moment by me.

"Why, you look," said I, "as if you'd invented the finest scene ever written."

She did not answer me directly, but stood looking up at the stars. Then she said in a dreamy tone—

"I think I shall stick to my old idea in the book."

As she spoke, Chillington came out. Even in the dim light I saw a frown on his face.

"I say, Wynne," said he, "where's Miss Myles?"

"She's gone to bed," I answered. "She told me to wish you good-night for her, Miss Liston. No message for you, Chillington."

Miss Liston's eyes were on him. He took no notice of her; he stood frowning for an instant, then, with some muttered ejaculation, he strode back into the house. We heard his heavy tread across the drawing-room; we heard the door slam behind him, and I found myself looking on Miss Liston's altered face.

"What does he want her for, I wonder!" she said, in an agitation that made my presence, my thoughts, my suspicions, nothing to her. "He said nothing to me about wanting to speak to her to-night." And she walked slowly into the house, her eyes on the ground, and all the light gone from her face and the joy dead in it. Whereupon I, left alone, began to rail at the gods that a dear silly little soul like Miss Liston should bother her poor silly little head about a hulking fool; in which reflections I did, of course, immense injustice not only to an eminent author, but also to a perfectly honorable, though somewhat dense and decidedly conceited, gentleman.

The next morning Sir Gilbert Chillington ate dirt—there is no other way of expressing it—in great quantities and with infinite humility. My admirable friend Miss Pamela was severe. I saw

him walk six yards behind her for the length of the terrace : not a look nor a turn of her head gave him leave to join her. Miss Liston had gone up stairs, and I watched the scene from the window of the smoking-room. At last, at the end of the long walk, just where the laurel-bushes mark the beginning of the shrubberies—on the threshold of the scene of his crime—Pamela turned round suddenly and faced the repentant sinner. The most interesting things in life are those which, perhaps by the inevitable nature of the case, one does not hear ; and I did not hear the scene which followed. For a while they stood talking—rather he talked and she listened. Then she turned again and walked slowly into the shrubbery. Chillington followed. It was the end of a chapter, and I laid down the book.

How and from whom Miss Liston heard the news which Chillington himself told me without a glimmer of shame or a touch of embarrassment some two hours later I do not know ; but hear it she did before luncheon, for she came down ready armed with the neatest little speeches for both the happy lovers. I did not expect Pamela to show an ounce more feeling than the strictest canons of propriety demanded, and she fulfilled my expectations to the letter ; but I had hoped, I confess, that Chillington would have displayed some little consciousness. He did not ; and it is my belief that, throughout the events I have recorded he retained, and that he still retains, the conviction that Miss Liston's interest in him was purely literary and artistic, and that she devoted herself to his society simply because he offered an interesting problem and an inspiring theme. An ingenious charity may find in that attitude evidence of modesty. To my thinking it argues a more subtle and magnificent conceit than if he had fathomed the truth, as many humbler men in his place would have done.

On the day after the engagement was accomplished Miss Liston left us to return to London. She came out in her hat and jacket and sat down by me. The carriage was to be round in ten minutes. She put on her gloves slowly and buttoned them carefully. This done, she said :

" By the way, Mr. Wynne, I've adopted your suggestion. The man doesn't find out."

" Then you've made him a fool ? " I asked bluntly.

" No," she answered. " I—I think it might happen though he wasn't a fool."

She sat with her hands in her lap for a moment or two, then she went on in a lower voice :

"I'm going to make him find out afterwards."

I felt her glance on me, but I looked straight in front of me.

"What, after he's married the shallow girl?"

"Yes," said Miss Liston.

"Rather too late, isn't it? At least, if you mean there is to be a happy ending."

Miss Liston enlaced her fingers.

"I haven't decided about the ending yet," said she.

"If you intend to be tragical, which is the fashion, you'll do as you stand," said I.

"Yes," she answered slowly, "if I'm tragical I shall do as I stand."

There was another pause, and rather a long one. The wheels of the carriage were audible on the gravel on the front drive. Miss Liston stood up. I rose and held out my hand.

"Of course," said Miss Liston, still intent on her novel, "I could——" She stopped again and looked apprehensively at me. My face, I believe, expressed nothing more than polite attention and friendly interest.

"Of course," she began again, "the shallow girl—his wife—might—might die, Mr. Wynne."

"In novels," said I, with a smile, "while there's death, there's hope."

"Yes, in novels," she answered, giving me her hand.

The poor little woman was very unhappy. Unwisely, I dare say, I pressed her hand. It was enough. The tears leapt to her eyes. She gave my great fist a hurried squeeze—I have seldom been more touched by any thanks, however warm and eloquent—and hurried away.

I have read the novel. It came out a little while ago. The man finds out after the marriage; the shallow girl dies unregretted (she turns out as badly as possible); the real love comes, and all ends joyfully. It is a simple story, prettily told in its little way, and the scene of the reunion is written with genuine feeling—nay, with a touch of real passion. But then Sir Gilbert Chillington never meets Miss Liston now. And Lady Chillington not only behaves with her customary propriety, but is in the enjoyment of most excellent health and spirits.

True art demands an adaptation, not a copy, of life. I saw that remark somewhere the other day. It seems correct, if Miss Liston be any authority.

A LATTER-DAY ELAINE*

BY S. ELGAR BENET



IN April the low Southern country burst into green and gold; its rivers, bays and creeks reflected the blue of a misty sky, their tides ebbed and flowed among sedges rankly green to the water's edge.

Lynch's stood on a point where the river enters the bay. There was a schooner with bare poles in a cove; a lot of small boats, more or less unseaworthy, were drawn up on shore.

A road scarcely traceable in the grass led through a briary pasture to the house, whose sides were festooned with seines and dip-nets. Seven earthen milk-crocks stood in a row on a bench against the wall by the kitchen door.

The small yard was yellow with daffodils; Clint Lynch gathered a hundred and there were daffodils to spare. The flowers persistently divided themselves in two bunches; he bound each with a withe of grass.

His mother asked from the door:

"What yo' goin' to do with *two?*"

"I'm a-goin' to leave 'em fo' Pen as I go 'long past."

"Why 'n't yo' make one big bunch? Wait; I'll get yo' a piece o' string."

"This 'll do."

He wore his best coat and had polished his shoes. Martha Lynch came out, wrapped her hand in the corner of her apron

* Written for Short Stories. Illustrations by Mabel L. Humphrey.—Copyrighted.



and brushed him vigorously. When he mounted his horse and rode away she went to the gate and looked after him.

"What's he goin' to do with *two*?" she said aloud.

Ten miles down the stretch of sandy road a house stood by the wayside; it was colored purple and had a hipped roof. Its fences were very white; the garden borders had been freshly turned; the climbing rose and honeysuckle over the door neatly trimmed. A girl stood at the end of the path in the sunshine; she wore a crisp print frock, her light hair had been carefully arranged. When she heard the sound of the horse's hoofs she looked steadily in an opposite direction.

Lynch reined up on the grass and said:

"Good-ev'n'."

She turned with a start, her face suddenly pink:

"O, good-ev'n'; won't yo' 'light?"

"Tain't worth while, I'm 'bliged to yo'. Pleasant day."

"Very."

"How's all?"

"We're tolerable. Father, he's gone down to Mr. Smoot's; he went on business."

There followed a silence which neither found awkward. The horse tugged at the rein and nibbled the grass around the gate; a young white cat jumped on the post and rubbed her head against Fanny's shoulder. Fanny said presently:

"It's early fo' daffydils, ain't it? Ours ain't more'n beginning to bud."

Lynch answered inconsequently:

"As I was goin' through town, I thought I'd fetch some along fo' Pen an'——"

He leaned over and laid the larger bunch in Fanny's hands, holding them a moment as he did so.

"(O, thank yo', she said, "ain't yo' afraid yo're a-robbin' Pen?"

He rode on to the village; Pen was not at home; he left the other bunch at her door. Some women coming in from the country saw her as she put the flowers in a glass mug and set them in the window.

"O, Pen," they called. "You'd better look out, Pen. We jes' see a young lady not more'n a mile from here 'at's got a bunch o' daffydils fo' all the world like yourn—o'ny bigger. Daffydils ain't in bloom around here. They's o'ny one place where yo' can find 'em early's this, an' that's down the river. You'd better look out, Pen."

Pen was a very pretty girl; so intense and pathetic was her face that the smart cheap hat on the back of her head could not vulgarize it. Her cheeks were thin, but thinness in extreme youth is not a crime—they were smooth and white except when color like a flame dyed them; her eyes had a brilliant fire.

She took the flowers from the mug and ran out into the street.

The women looked after her and laughed.



"Fanny'll ketch it now; I wouldn't like to be Fanny when Pen gets there."

Pen sped over the sunny mile of road to Fanny's house; she went around to the kitchen door, which stood open.

Fanny sat leaning over the table; her arms were outstretched, her hands clasped around a bowl containing a bunch of daffodils.

Pen flung her flowers upon the table.

"There!" she said, "I reckon yo' might as well take these, too."

Fanny sat up and stammered:

"I don' know what yo' mean. Won't yo' have a seat?"

Pen stood with her hands on her hips and looked at her; color had gone from her face, veins around her temples and lips showed bluely.

"I know what *you* mean," she said, "an' I want to tell yo, that I'll not share with anybody. Take *all* the daffydils."

"I never asked fo' one."

"Not in words, maybe."

She turned and walked from the room; Fanny ran out and called after her:

"Don't be mad, Pen."

On Saturday Fanny was not at the gate when Lynch rode by; he reined in his horse and waited. Daffodils were blooming in her borders, cowslips were coming into bud. Fanny watched him through half-closed blinds. That afternoon Pen had two bouquets.

On the following Saturday Fanny was in her usual place; she wore a blue ribbon around her neck and looked as guileless as her young white cat. She hung her head and put her hands behind her when Lynch offered her a bunch of apple-bloom.

"Pen——" she said, and stopped.

Lynch sprang from his horse and came close to the gate; he laid his large brown hand over her plump fingers.

"What's the matter?"

She raised her head and looked at him; her lips quivered, a tear hung on either cheek.

Lynch laid his arm across her shoulders; he bent and kissed the tears away.



"What has Pen to do with it?" he asked, roughly, and thrust the flowers into her bosom.

All the evening Fanny sang as she went about her work.

In a little while everybody in the village began to say that Pen was about to lose her lover—that she had lost him. The men talked of it over the forge and on the street corners; women gathered in little groups on their way to the shop and related marvelous things.

They hung over their gates in the dusky evening and talked of Pen and Fanny and Clint Lynch. A woman had come in from the country on a visit; they repeated every incident for her benefit. The village oracle said:

"She carries her head high, Pen does, an' looks yo' in the eyes 's if she hadn't nothin' to be ashamed of."

"No more she has," interrupted another, whose opinion, by the way, was not of much value, "'tain't no disgrace to Pen. She's got a way o' ridin' rough-shod over people, but Pen never done anything to be ashamed of. You needn't tell me—Fanny's been a-tollin' Clint on. Haven't I seen her myself hangin' over the fence reg'lar about the time he comes in to town Sat'-day evenin's?"

"Well, as to that, I don't know; but it seems to me if a man 'd walk off in broad daylight an' leave me for another woman, I'd feel like I had something to be ashamed of; I'd behave myself meeker like."

"I see Clint at Fanny's Tuesday. They do say he ain't been near Pen this two weeks."

"He ain't set his foot on her threshold goin' on three," said the oracle. "Nobody can't go to Pen's an' me not see 'em. Nobody but her father——"

"Hush! Here she comes."

Pen joined them; her voice was higher than theirs, her laughter shriller and more frequent; it rang through the shadowy street.

A man set a lighted lamp on a table at the window; its rays brought a pale dull green out of the dusk; they shone on Pen's face and showed the women how white were her cheeks.

A latch clicked in the stillness; Pen stopped speaking and listened; color flushed her face.

"I must go; that's Clint."

She ran across the street, but came back to say:

"Clint's been busy lately; he's fishin' down the Potomac a good ways. I reckon yo' noticed he hasn't been around much?"

"Yes," said the women, "we noticed it."

They watched a light flare up in her window, and her shadow upon the blind before they spoke.

"Tain't no use her buildin' on that. But on the other hand it's jes' as hard. Clint says he won't marry Fanny less'n Pen sets him free."

"You wait till she does," said a voice scornfully. "He'll see doomsday first."

"I don' blame Pen," urged her champion. "Pen, she didn't ask him to marry *her*; he done the askin', an' now he ought to abide by it."

"Seems like they's a stick in soak fo' every Lynch 'at breaks his promise to a woman. My gran'mother knows it's so as far back as three generations, an' we all remember Clint's brothers, 'specially his brother Tom."

They put their heads together and whispered; they said:

"Yes—O yes, yes indeedy."

"An' poor Mis' Lynch, they say she's ravin' distracted fo' fear Clint won't stick to his word. Well, Pen's goin' like her mother; she's white an' red an' her eyes is glassy. Fanny's good an' strong. I never was the one to favor bringin' a lot o' sickly children into the world; I don' believe in it."

A little voice cried sharply through the stillness.

"That's the baby," said the oracle.

"Good-night."

The group broke up. Rain began to fall, a swift drenching shower.

Pen's triumph was short-lived. Clint Lynch had come to beg her to release him. He was bound to her as strongly by a superstition as if he had been bound by love.

He rose after a long silence and went out. Pen ran swiftly behind him; she clasped his great body in her weak arms and laid her face upon his sleeve.

"Don't look at me—don't look at me!" she cried in a passion of shame and tenderness. "O, I love you, an' I hate myself for it! I love yo', but I will not give yo' up."



When he went away she stood in the deserted street. The rain had ceased, but every little wind sent a shower from the trees pattering upon the ground. The air was heavy with the odor of wet mould, living green, above all, with the scent of red roses, blooming royally in every garden. Afterward, through the summer, the fragrance of a red rose awakened anew those mingled feelings of shame and tenderness.

She sobbed the nights away, but in the morning she opened her windows and sang loudly that the women in the street might hear. When she saw them gathering in twos and threes she knew they were talking of her and hastened among them with her boldest air.

She went very often to see Fanny, although the mile of road seemed always longer.

There was a bewildering, milky whiteness about Fanny which gave to her little body an unspeakable fascination. Pen did not appreciate it; she thought her very plain; she studied her that she might know her defects by heart.

"You've got freckles," she said; "they're all over yo' cheek-bones, clean aroun' to yo' hair."

"They don' show much."

"Maybe not—at a distance; but if anybody comes real close he can see 'em. An' yo' nose ain't in the middle o' yo' face."

Pen told over a legion of lovers, and ended by asking, with an infinite pity:

"But *you* never had a beau, had yo'?"

"No," answered Fanny, meekly, "I never had a beau *before*."

Sometimes she made a comfortable place for her arm on the end of the table, dropped her face upon it and cried softly, while Pen stabbed her figuratively with bonnet-pins. She never forgot her manners; she went to the door and said politely:

"Good-by, Pen; yo' must come soon again."

Only once, when Pen had been very exasperating, had laughed at the color of her hair and the size and shape of her shoe, after the usual farewell, she called with mild spite:

"Everybody says yo' got the consumption—'at yo' mother died of it!"

Pen pretended she did not hear. When she went again there was a great bunch of marshmallows, pink and white, in a stone jug placed conspicuously. The meadows along the river at Lynch's were rosy with them.

She discoursed on the facility of man's affection; she said:

"Men don't love women that ain't pretty."

"Some men don't love women that *are* pretty," returned Fanny, neatly.

Pen humbled her pride and begged Fanny to give Lynch back to her; she promised her a number of things in exchange. Fanny remembered much which she had borne from her friend; beside, she had grown pious. She cast down her eyes and folded her hands:

"Tain't no doin' o' mine, Pen," she said; "it's the Lord's doin'."

Pen went out of the house and down the long, dusty road for the last time.

In August Martha Lynch said to her son:

"They say Pen's took to her bed."

It was evening, dim and still under the cedars in the small yard; beyond, the water in white loneliness reflected a gray sky; the tide called plaintively in among the sedges. There was the sound of cows biting the grass in the briary pasture.

Martha put the seventh milk-crock in place on the end of the line and repeated:

"They say Pen's took to her bed, but whether it's from fever or whether she's goin' like her mother, nobody seems to know."

Her son made no reply.

"I ain't the woman to interfere with nobody. Yo' father used often say, 'Marthy, if everybody tended to they own business same as you, they wouldn't be much trouble in the world.' Yo' can't say I ever interfered with you, Clint, not even when yo' was payin' 'tention to that brazen-faced Darrow girl, although I never could bear the sight of her mother from the time we was girls together."

"No 'm."

"But I seen how things was goin' from the time yo' made two bunches o' daffydils that Sat'day in April. Yo' know I asked you then what yo' was goin' to do with two; didn't I, Clint?"

"Yes 'm."

"That made all the trouble. A man 'at's engaged to one girl ain't got no business carryin' daffydils to two, nor apple-blossoms nor yet marshmallers. Don' make no difference how friendly they are, girls ain't never that friendly. Why couldn't yo' be satisfied? What's wrong with Pen?"

"They ain't nothin' wrong with Pen."

"I ain't pleased at the prospec' o' havin' that Fanny for a

daughter. She warn't raised aroun' here. I never did like that Fanny."

"Don't trouble, you ain't likely to have a daughter."

She put out her hand and stroked his knee.

"Come, Clint—not Pen? Yo'll be tired o' Fanny by an' by. Pen's a good girl, she'll make yo' a better wife 'n Fanny, even if yo' don' think so at first. Wives an' husbands are all the same after a little while. Warn't I married to yo' father thirty-odd year, an' don' I know? An' didn't I cry my eyes out all my weddin'-night because he warn't James Tarascon, from down the river a-piece? I'd forgot about it till I see you actin' like myself about Fanny. But gradually James he didn't seem to 'mount to nothin', yo' father took his place. That's the way it 'd be with you, you'd forget Pen ain't Fanny."

"I ain't made like that."

She began to plead with him:

"Yo' won't forget, will yo'? They never was the Lynch yet that didn't get his dues fo' playin' a woman false. They was yo' uncle an' yo' cousin an' yo' own dear brothers—Tom went down right out here, I see him with these eyes—ten days after he broke his engagement to Jane Sheer, him courtin' Rosy Crandal at the same time. I'll never forget it; they brought him up in the night a-drippin', with Jane herself walkin' ahead an' holdin' the light; seemed like a judgment. Yo' ain't goin' to get yo'-self in a scrape like that, Clint? Yo' ain't goin' to marry Fanny with all this befo' yo'?"

"Less'n Pen sets me free honor'ble I don' 'low to marry nobody."

He muttered something about the seines, and took the path through the pasture to the river-shore.

Pen was ill; her old father stopped the women in the street to speak of her:

"Pen was always a good girl," he said; "her tongue was a bit sharp maybe, at times. What o' that? She was *always* a good girl—specially to her father. Look at my socks and shirts, an' did yo' ever see such bread in yo' life?"

She awakened in the night with a feeling as if life were strong within her; there was an absence of pain and weariness.

A lamp burned low in a corner; long shadows flared over wall and ceiling. Two old women leaned forward until their touzled heads touched; their profiles were like silhouettes against a white

space of the wall. Each lifted a wrinkled hand in an attitude bespeaking attention.

Pen raised herself on her elbow and listened.

"They say that his goin's on is dreadful; he rides that ten miles—or I should say nine an' a half, for I don't want to make it out one bit worse'n it is; it's bad enough, the dear knows—he rides over that road reg'lar, every day, and she stan's at her gate in broad daylight an' waits for him. An' that poor girl a-layin' there!"

"She won't be there much longer."

"Who knows? She's that strong when she's out o' her mind I'd make no surprise if she died like her gran'mother, old Penelope Vilet; when she felt herself a-dyin', 'Lift me up,' says she, an' they lifted her onto her feet an' she died standin'—she had such a will."

"Poor Pen!" whispered the other; she looked toward the bed and sighed. "She wears his ring yet."

"It 'll be buried with her."

"It do seem *such* a pity, but then——"

She rose and tied her handkerchief over her head.

"The night's a bit damp."

"Wait; John Vilet gets everything of the best."

There were little gurgling sounds and the clink of glasses as they drank their wine, bending their heads backward to drain the last drops.

They went down the staircase softly; the nurse came back alone and stood at the bedside. She asked:

"Do yo' want anything, honey?"

She poured more wine into a glass, drank it audibly, and made herself comfortable in her chair.

"I won't even close my eyes." Her head fell forward on her breast; she slept soundly.

Pen lay quite still with that wonderful strength thrilling her. She thought of many things, of the seines which Clint Lynch visited at break of day, of the river running swiftly to the bay where the nets were spread, and of the little boat that lay at the wharf straining at the rope which held it to its moorings.

Late in the night she arose and clothed herself in a white frock, brushed out her tangled hair and bound it with a ribbon. She was conscious of a desire to look very well; she bent close to the mirror that she might the better judge her reflection.

The night was sultry. Out in the street warm winds went up

and down beneath the trees; the misty sky was full of stars. The tide had turned; the little boat was eager to get away. Pen stepped into it, took the oars and slipped the rope. The current carried her swiftly. The shores were black, the water a soft darkness; the broken reflection of a star lay upon it like fragments of shivered gold.

There had been no purpose in her mind beyond meeting Lynch. As she sat leaning over the idle oars a hundred resolves formed themselves, ending always in the words, spoken passionately:

"I will never give him up while I live."

Once she lifted her face to the sky; there came the thought of heaven and a feeling of surprised regret that God had not helped her—had not taken Clint bodily from Fanny and given him back. She remembered that she had asked him to do so upon three separate occasions. She felt sorry, too, that there was no woman representing divinity up there, above those misty spaces; she would understand these things so much better. She thought of a girl whom she had once known who prayed to Mary. She regretted that her own knowledge of Mary did not warrant a petition. She repeated:

"I will never give him up while I live."

Suddenly through the stillness, like a mightier, weightier silence, encompassing all the rest, came to her the thought of death. Words spoken around her bedside, penetrating her delirium, took on a bitter meaning. She, the living, breathing Pen, with her outraged heart, her despised love, must leave the world while yet Clint Lynch was in it. The fictitious strength deserted her; she bowed her head upon her knee, but finally lay down in the boat and looked again at the sky. The world held but Lynch and herself. She took the ring from her finger and clasped it firmly; with one supreme effort she offered love and pride as a sacrifice; she effaced herself from her prayers, asked nothing for her soul, but begged that the ring in her outstretched hand might sign to Lynch his release should her lips have failed their office.

Stars dropped one by one behind the black rim of the horizon, the east grew dappled with light, her boat slipped down the river with the tide.

At daybreak Lynch rowed out to his nets. The sky began to flame; a gleaming surface gave its red back again. A boat, tangled among the stakes and cords, rocked with the long swell of the waves. Lynch dipped his oars and floated to the side.

He saw the outstretched hand, not yet quite cold, and the gleam of gold in the folded fingers; he understood. A revulsion of feeling wrung his heart; he forgot Fanny's bewildering whiteness and the negative power of her eyes.

"O, Pen—dear Pen!" he cried, and stooped toward her; a subtle decency withheld his lips.

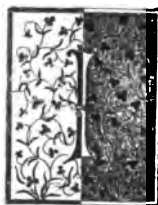
He made a pillow of his coat for her head, folded her hands across her breast, and sat looking upon her. Disease had not wasted her beauty, it had intensified its pathos. A smile lingered about her lifted brows; her lips asked mutely of him a forgiveness which they had not asked of God. The wind blew her glittering hair around her face, stained with the sunrise.

Lynch fastened her boat to his own and lifted the oars; through the fiery dawning they went upward with the stream.





BY WALTHER TREDE



IN the little Japanese village of Jowcusi a mirror was quite unheard of, and a girl never knew whether she was pretty or ugly till she was old enough to have a lover to describe her charms to her. One day a young Japanese, whose daily work it was to draw one of the light Japanese wagons called jinrikishas, found in the street a little pocket-mirror, which some English lady had probably dropped.

It was the first time in his life that Kiki-Tsum had ever seen such a thing. He looked into it, and there he saw, to his great surprise, a brown face and a pair of black eyes with a very astonished expression.

"Verily this is a likeness of my departed father!" said Kiki-Tsum to himself, in amazement. "Can it be a warning?"

He wrapped the valuable object carefully in his handkerchief and hid it in the bosom of his shirt.

When he returned home at night he went and concealed his treasure in an old jar which was seldom moved. He knew of no safer place. He said nothing to his young wife about it, for women are great babblers, and Kiki-Tsum felt that this was too sacred a subject for the neighbors to chatter about.

For several days Kiki-Tsum could think of nothing but the picture which he had found. He often left his work and hurried home to take a peep at his treasure.

His little wife, Lili-Tsee, could not imagine why her husband came home so often. At first she was content with his explanation that he only came for a look at her dear face; still, as the

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same thing occurred day after day she grew mistrustful and began to watch her husband closely. She noticed that he never left the house without first going alone into the little back room. Lili-Tsee must find out what it all meant. She examined the little room every day after her faithful husband had gone to his work, but she could find nothing. One day, however, she came suddenly into the room and saw him lift the jar in which she kept her dried rose-leaves. Kiki-Tsum made some remark about the rickety shelf on which the jar stood, and Lili-Tsee agreed with him, but hardly had her husband left the house when she climbed up on a chair, drew out the little mirror from among the rose-leaves, and made a cruel discovery. A woman's portrait! And she had so confided in Kiki-Tsum's love! She sat down on the floor and cried. So that was the reason he came home so often! Full of grief and rage, she looked again at the portrait, and wondered what her husband could see to admire in such a face. Those angry eyes! They actually made her tremble, and she dared not take another look. She grieved all day long and could not even prepare her husband's supper. When Kiki-Tsum came home at evening he was astonished to find neither supper nor wife. He stepped into the little back room.

"So this is the faith you pledged me! This is the way you treat me, when we have hardly been married a year!"

"What nonsense are you talking, Lili-Tsee?" asked her astonished husband, who thought his wife was losing her senses.

"Nonsense, indeed!" said his wife, angrily. "So you hid your sweetheart's portrait in my rose-jar? There, take it and keep it. I don't want to look at her ugly face again." And poor Lili-Tsee began to sob and cry.

"I don't understand what you are talking about," stammered her poor husband.

"Ah, you don't understand!" said she with a scornful laugh. "I understand only too well. You love that horrid fright better than you do your own true wife!"

"What are you saying, Lili-Tsee?" asked Kiki-Tsum, who was now getting angry in his turn. "This is a picture of my dear, dead father. I found it in the street not long ago and hid it in the rose-jar for safe keeping."

Lili-Tsee was more furious than ever. "Do you think that I cannot tell a man's face from a woman's?"

Kiki-Tsum was also very much excited now, and a violent quarrel ensued. The door of the house was ajar and a Bonze (a

Japanese priest) who was passing heard the loud talking and came in.

"My dear children, why are you so angry? What are you quarreling about?"

"Father," said Kiki-Tsum, "my wife is crazy!"

"My son, all women are more or less crazy," answered the worthy Bonze. "You are wrong to expect an exception in her case, and must just bear your misfortune like a man."

"But she accuses me of telling a lie!"

"Oh, father," sobbed Lili-Tsee, "my husband keeps a woman's portrait hidden in my rose-jar."

"I swear that I have no portrait but my deceased father's!" cried the poor husband, raising his hands to heaven.

"Children, children!" said the holy man, sternly, "show me the portrait."

The Bonze took the glass and looked attentively into it. Then he shook his white head and said solemnly:

"Children, be reconciled to each other. You are both mistaken. This is the portrait of a holy and venerable Bonze. I do not understand why you did not at once recognize this saintly countenance. I must take it with me and place it among the sacred relics in our temple."

The pious Bonze blessed the husband and wife—who clasped each other's hands in token of reconciliation—and then went his way with his precious relic.



SHUT OUT

BY F. ANSTEY

Author of "Vice Versâ," "A Fallen Idol," etc.



IT is towards the end of an afternoon in December, and Wilfred Rolleston is walking along a crowded London street with his face turned westward. A few moments ago and he was scarcely conscious of where he was or where he meant to go; he was walking on mechanically in a heavy stupor, through which there stole a haunting sense of degradation and despair that tortured him dully. And suddenly, as if by magic, this has vanished; he seems to himself to have waked from a miserable day-dream to the buoyant consciousness of youth and hope. Temperaments which are subject to fits of heavy and causeless depression have their compensations sometimes in the reaction which follows; the infesting cares, as in Longfellow's poem, "fold their tents, like the Arabs, and as silently steal away," and with their retreat comes an exquisite exhilaration which more equable dispositions can never experience.

Is this so with Rolleston now? He only knows that the cloud has lifted from his brain, and that in the clear sunshine which bursts upon him now he can look his sorrows in the face and know that there is nothing so terrible in them after all.

It is true that he is not happy at the big City day-school which he has just left. How should he be? He is dull and crabbed and uncouth, and knows too well that he is an object of general dislike; no one there cares to associate with him, and he makes no attempt to overcome their prejudices, being perfectly aware that they are different from him, and hating them for it, but hating himself, perhaps, the most.

And though all his evenings are spent at home, there is little rest for him even there, for the work for the next day must be prepared; and he sits over it till late, sometimes with desperate

efforts to master the difficulties, but more often staring at the page before him with eyes that are almost willfully vacant.

All this has been and is enough in itself to account for the gloomy state into which he had sunk. But—and how could he have forgotten it?—it is over for the present.

To-night he will not have to sit up struggling with the tasks which will only cover him with fresh disgrace on the morrow; for a whole month he need not think of them, nor of the classes in which the hand of every one is against him. For the holidays have begun; to-day has been the last of the term. Is there no reason for joy and thankfulness in that? What a fool he has been to let those black thoughts gain such a hold over him!

Slowly, more as if it had all happened a long time ago instead of quite recently, the incidents of the morning come back to him, vivid and clear once more—morning chapel and the Doctor's sermon, and afterwards the pretence of work and relaxed discipline in the class-rooms, when the results of the examinations had been read out, with the names of the boys who had gained prizes and their remove to the form above. He had come out last, of course, but no one expected anything else from him; a laugh had gone round the desks when his humble total closed the list, and he had joined in it to show them he didn't care. And then the class had been dismissed, and there had been friendly good-bys, arrangements for walking home in company or for meeting during the holidays—for all but him: he had gone out alone—and the dull blankness had come over him from which he has only just recovered.

But, for the present, at all events, he has got rid of it completely; he is going home, where at least he is not despised, where he will find a sanctuary from gibes and jostlings and impositions; and the longer he thinks of this the higher his spirits rise, and he steps briskly, with a kind of exultation, until the people he passes in the streets turn and look at him, struck by his expression. "They can see how jolly I'm feeling," he thinks with a smile.

The dusk is falling, and the shops he passes are brilliant with lights and decorations, but he does not stop to look at any of them; his mind is busy with settling how he shall employ himself on this the first evening of his liberty, the first for so long on which he could feel his own master.

At first he decides to read. Is there not some book he had begun and meant to finish, so many days ago now that he has

even forgotten what it was all about, and only remembers that it was exciting?

And yet, he thinks, he won't read to-night—not on the very first night of the holidays. Quite lately—yesterday or the day before—his mother had spoken to him, gently but very seriously, about what she called the morose and savage fits which would bring misery upon him if he did not set himself earnestly to overcome them.

And there were times, he knew, when it seemed as if a demon possessed him and drove him to wound even those who loved him and whom he loved—times when their affection only roused in him some hideous spirit of sullen contradiction.

He feels softened now somehow, and has a new longing for the love he has so often harshly repulsed. He *will* overcome this sulkiness of his; he will begin this very evening; as soon as he gets home he will tell his mother that he is sorry, that he does love her really, only that when these fits come on him he hardly knows what he says or does.

And she will forgive him, only too gladly; and his mind will be quite at ease again. No, not quite; there is still something he must do before that; he has a vague recollection of a long-standing coolness between himself and his younger brother, Lionel. They never have got on very well together; Lionel is so different—much cleverer even already, for one thing; better looking, too, and better tempered. Whatever they quarreled about, Wilfred was very sure that he was the offender; Lionel never begins that kind of thing. But he will put himself in the right at once, and ask Lionel to make friends again; he will consent readily enough—he always does.

And then he has a bright idea: he will take his brother some little present to prove that he really wishes to behave decently for the future. What shall he buy?

He finds himself near a large toy-shop at the time, and in the window are displayed several regiments of brightly colored tin warriors—the very thing! Lionel is still young enough to delight in them.

Feeling in his pocket, Rolleston discovers more loose silver than he thought he possessed, and so he goes into the shop and asks for one of the boxes of soldiers. He is served by one of two neatly dressed female assistants, who stare and giggle at one another at his first words, finding it odd, perhaps, that a fellow of his age should buy toys—as if, he thinks indignantly,

they couldn't see that it was not for *himself* he wanted the things.

But he goes on, feeling happier after his purchase. They will see now that he is not so bad after all. It is long since he has felt such a craving to be thought well of by somebody.

A little farther on he comes to a row of people, mostly women and tradesmen's boys, standing on the curbstone opposite a man who is seated on a little wooden box on wheels, drawn up close to the pavement. He is paralytic and blind, with a pinched, white face, framed in an old-fashioned fur cap with big ear-lappets; he seems to be preaching or reading, and Rolleston stops idly enough to listen for a few moments, the women making room for him with alacrity, and the boys staring curiously round at the new arrival with a grin.

He hardly pays much attention to this; he is listening to the poem which the man in the box is reciting with a nasal and metallic snuffle in his voice:

There's a harp *and* a crown,
For you and *for* me,
Hanging on the boughs
Of that Christmas tree!

He hears, and then hurries on again, repeating the stanza mechanically to himself, without seeing anything particularly ludicrous about it. The words have reminded him of that Christmas party at the Gordons' next door. Did not Ethel Gordon ask him particularly to come, and did he not refuse her sullenly? What a brute he was to treat her like that! If she were to ask him again, he thinks he would not say no, though he does hate parties.

Ethel is a dear girl, and never seems to think him good-for-nothing, as most people do. Perhaps it is sham, though—no, he can't think that when he remembers how patiently and kindly she has borne with his senseless fits of temper and tried to laugh away his gloom.

Not every girl as pretty as Ethel is would care to notice him, and persist in it in spite of everything; yet he has sulked with her of late. Was it because she had favored Lionel? He is ashamed to think that this may have been the reason.

Never mind, that is all over now; he will start clear with everybody. He will ask Ethel, too, to forgive him. Is there nothing he can do to please her? Yes; some time ago she had

asked him to draw something for her. (He detests drawing lessons, but he has rather a taste for drawing things out of his own head.) He had told her, not too civilly, that he had work enough without doing drawings for girls. He will paint her something to-night as a surprise; he will begin as soon as tea is cleared away; it will be more sociable than reading a book.

And then already he sees a vision of the warm little paneled room, and himself getting out his color-box and sitting down to paint by lamp-light—for any light does for his kind of coloring—while his mother sits opposite and Lionel watches the picture growing under his hand.

What shall he draw? He gets quite absorbed in thinking over this; his own tastes run in a gory direction, but perhaps Ethel, being a girl, may not care for battles or desperate duels. A compromise strikes him; he will draw a pirate ship—that will be first-rate—with the black flag flying on the mainmast, and the pirate captain on the poop scouring the ocean with a big glass in search of merchantmen; all about the deck and rigging he can put the crew, with red caps, and belts stuck full of pistols and daggers.

And on the right there shall be a bit of the pirate island, with a mast and another black flag—he knows he will enjoy picking out the skull and cross-bones in thick Chinese white—and then, if there is room, he will add a cannon, and perhaps a palm-tree. A pirate island always has palm-trees.

He is so full of this projected picture of his that he is quite surprised to find that he is very near the square where he lives; but here, just in front of him, at the end of the narrow lane, is the public-house with the coach and four engraved on the ground-glass of the lower part of the window, and above it the bottles full of colored water.

And here is the greengrocer's. How long is it since it was a barber's?—surely a very little time. And there is the bootmaker's with its outside display of dangling shoes, and the row of naked gas jets blown to pale blue specks and whistling red tongues by turns as a gust sweeps across them.

This is his home, this little, dingy, old-fashioned red-brick house at an angle of the square, with a small paved space railed in before it. He pushes open the old gate with the iron arch above, where an oil-lamp used to hang, and hurries up to the door with the heavy shell-shaped porch, impatient to get to the warmth and light which await him within.

The bell has got out of order, for only a faint jangle comes from below as he rings; he waits a little and then pulls the handle again, more sharply this time, and still no one comes.

When Betty does think proper to come up and open the door he will tell her that it is too bad keeping a fellow standing out here, in the fog and cold, all this time. . . . She is coming at last—no, it was fancy; it seems as if Betty had slipped out for something, and perhaps the cook is upstairs, and his mother may be dozing by the fire, as she has begun to do of late.

Losing all patience, he gropes for the knocker, and, groping in vain, begins to hammer with bare fists on the door, louder and louder, until he is interrupted by a rough voice from the railings behind him.

"Now, then, what are you up to there, eh?" says the voice, which belongs to a burly policeman who has stopped suspiciously on the pavement.

"Why," says Rolleston, "I want to get in, and I can't make them hear me. I wish you'd try what you can do, will you?"

The policeman comes slowly in to the gate. "I dessay," he says jocularly. "Is there anythink else? Come, suppose you move on."

A curious kind of dread of he knows not what begins to creep over Wilfred at this.

"Move on?" he cries, "*why* should I move on? This is my house; don't you see? I live here."

"Now look 'ere, my joker, I don't want a job over this," says the constable stolidly. "You'll bring a crowd round in another minute if you keep on that 'ammering."

"Mind your own business," says the other, with growing excitement.

"That's what you'll make me do if you don't look out," is the retort. "Will you move on before I make you?"

"But, I say," protests Rolleston, "I'm not joking; I give you my word I'm not. I do live here. Why, I've just come back from school, and I can't get in."

"Pretty school *you* come from!" growls the policeman; "'andles on to *your* lesson books, if *I* knows anything. 'Ere, out you go!"

Rolleston's fear increases. "I won't! I won't!" he cries frantically, and rushing back to the door beats upon it wildly. On the other side of it are love and shelter, and it will not open to him. He is cold and hungry and tired after his walk. Why do they keep him out like this?

"Mother!" he calls hoarsely. "Can't you hear me, mother? It's Wilfred. Let me in."

The other takes him, not roughly, by the shoulder. "Now you take my advice," he says. "You ain't quite yourself; you're making a mistake. I don't want to get you in trouble if you don't force me to it. Drop this 'ere tomfool game and go home quiet to wherever it is you *do* live."

"I tell you I live here, you fool!" shrieks Wilfred, in deadly terror lest he should be forced away before the door is opened.

"And I tell you you don't do nothing of the sort," says the policeman, beginning to lose his temper. "No one don't live 'ere, nor ain't done not since I've bin on the beat. Use your eyes if you're not too far gone."

For the first time Rolleston seems to see things plainly as they are. He glances round the square—that is just as it always is on foggy winter evenings, with its central enclosure a shadowy black patch against a reddish glimmer, beyond which the lighted windows of the houses make yellow bars of varying length and tint.

But this house, his own—why, it is all shuttered and dark. Some of the window-panes are broken; there is a pale gray patch in one that looks like a dingy bill; the knocker has been unscrewed from the door, and on its scraped panels some one has scribbled words and rough caricatures that were surely not there when he left that morning.

Can anything—any frightful disaster—have come in that short time? No, he will not think of it. He will not let himself be terrified, all for nothing.

"Now, are you goin'?" says the policeman after a pause.

Rolleston puts his back against the door and clings to the sides. "No!" he shouts. "I don't care what you say; I don't believe you; they are all in there—they are, I tell you, they are—they *are*!"

In a second he is in the constable's strong grasp and being dragged, struggling violently, to the gate, when a soft voice, a woman's, intercedes for him.

"What is the matter? Oh, don't—don't be so rough with him, poor creature!" it cries pitifully.

"I'm only exercisin' my duty, mum," says the officer; "he wants to create a disturbance 'ere."

"No," cries Wilfred, "he lies! I only want to get into my own house, and no one seems to hear me. *You* don't think anything is the matter, do you?"

It is a lady who has been pleading for him ; as he wrests himself from his captor and comes forward she sees his face, and her own grows white and startled.

" Wilfred ! " she exclaims.

" Why, you know my name ! " he says. " Then you can tell him it's all right. Do I know you ? You speak like—is it—*Ethel* ? "

" Yes," she says, and her voice is low and trembling, " I am Ethel."

He is silent for an instant ; then he says slowly, " You are not the same—nothing is the same ; it is all changed—changed—and oh, my God, what am I ? "

Slowly the truth is borne in upon his brain, muddled and disordered by long excess, and the last shred of the illusion which had possessed him, drifts away.

He knows now that his boyhood, with such possibilities of happiness as it had ever held, has gone forever. He has been knocking at a door which will open for him never again, and the mother, by whose side his evening was to have been passed, died long, long years ago.

The past, blotted out completely for an hour by some freak of the memory, comes back to him, and he sees his sullen, morbid boyhood changing into something worse still, until by slow degrees he became what he is now—dissipated, degraded, lost.

At first the shock, the awful loneliness he awakes to, and the shame of being found thus by the woman for whom he had felt the only pure love he had known, overwhelm him utterly, and he leans his head upon his arms as he clutches the railings, and sobs with a grief that is terrible in its utter abandonment.

The very policeman is silent and awed by what he feels to be a scene from the human tragedy, though he may not be able to describe it to himself by any more suitable phrase than " a rum start."

" You can go now, policeman," says the lady, putting money in his hand. " You see I know this—this gentleman. Leave him to me ; he will give you no trouble now."

And the constable goes, taking care, however, to keep an eye occasionally on the corner where this has taken place. He has not gone long before Rolleston raises his head with a husky laugh ; his manner has changed now ; he is no longer the boy in thought and expression that he was a short time before, and speaks as might be expected from his appearance.

"I remember it all now," he says. "You are Ethel Gordon, of course you are, and you wouldn't have anything to do with me—and quite right, too—and then you married my brother Lionel. You see I'm as clear as a bell again now. So you came up and found me battering at the old door, eh? Do you know, I got the fancy I was a boy again and coming home to—bah, what does all that matter? Odd sort of fancy, though, wasn't it? Drink is always playing me some cursed trick now. A pretty fool I must have made of myself!"

She says nothing, and he thrusts his hands deep in his ragged pockets. "Hallo! what's this I've got?" he says, as he feels something at the bottom of one of them; and, bringing out the box of soldiers he had bought half an hour before, he holds it up with a harsh laugh which has the ring of despair in it.

"Do you see this?" he says to her. "You'll laugh when I tell you it's a toy I bought just now for—guess whom—for your dear husband! Must have been pretty bad, mustn't I? Shall I give it to you to take to him—no? Well, perhaps he has outgrown such things now, so here goes!" and he pitches the box over the railings, and it falls with a shiver of broken glass as the pieces of painted tin rattle out upon the flagstones.

"And now I'll wish you good-evening," he says, sweeping off his battered hat with mock courtesy.

She tries to keep him back. "No, Wilfred, no; you must not go like that. We live here still, Lionel and I, in the same old house," and she indicates the house next door; "he will be home very soon. Will you" (she cannot help a little shudder at the thought of such a guest)—"will you come in and wait for him?"

"Throw myself into his arms, eh?" he says. "How delighted he would be! I'm just the sort of brother to be a credit to a highly respectable young barrister like him. You really think he'd like it? No; it's all right, Ethel; don't be alarmed; I was only joking. I shall never come in your way, I promise you. I'm just going to take myself off."

"Don't say that," she says (in spite of herself she feels relieved); "tell me—is there nothing we can do—no help we can give you?"

"Nothing," he answers, fiercely; "I don't want your pity. Do you think I can't see that you wouldn't touch me with the tongs if you could help it? It's too late to snivel over me now, and I'm well enough as I am. You leave me alone to go to the

devil my own way ; it's all I ask of you. Good-by. It's Christmas, isn't it? I haven't dreamed *that*, at all events. Well, I wish you and Lionel as merry a Christmas as I mean to have. I can't say more than that in the way of enjoyment."

He turns on his heel at the last words and slouches off down the narrow lane by which he had come.

Ethel Rolleston stands for a while, looking after his receding form till the fog closes round it and she can see it no more.

She feels as if she had seen a ghost ; and for her at least the enclosure before the deserted house next door will be haunted evermore—haunted by a forlorn and homeless figure sobbing there by the railings.

As for the man, he goes on his way until he finds a door which—alas!—is not closed against him.





IN THE THIRD CAPACITY*

BY F. C. PHILIPS



WHEN Gerald Singleton was in Rome worshipping Art, although in the fitness of things he should have been in the Temple studying jurisprudence and otherwise qualifying himself for a legal career, he received a shock. He was only twenty-seven, so he took it easily—in fact, he took most matters in life easily, excepting pictures and Greek marbles, and

other things with which he ought to have had nothing to do; but to hear that Mr. Justice Singleton, whose only child he was, had suddenly taken it into his head to marry again was sufficiently startling for all that.

He was with a friend, whose acquaintance he had made in Paris, when he got the news. They had just had breakfast, and were puffing the matutinal cigarette.

"That's a dreadful bore," said the friend, who was a young painter, with "yiews," and visions of the time when he should "make a school," and who wore his hair long prematurely. "That's a dreadful bore, Singleton: I suppose you will have to go back for the wedding?"

"I suppose I shall," said Singleton; "it seems due to one's father to attend his wedding when one can,—I'll start to-morrow!

* A selection from The Pall Mall Magazine.

Pratelli promised to show me that thing he is doing if I went round to his *atelier* at one. Let's stroll on."

Pratelli's "thing" was so interesting, and the discussion that followed proved so engrossing, that it was not until evening that the letter in Gerald's pocket-book was remembered. When he re-read it he observed by the date that it had been on his trail for nearly three weeks, and that the wedding must be over.

"I shan't be able to be my father's best man after all," he remarked: "what a bother!—or wouldn't one's father make one his best man? I don't know. I'll run over to England to congratulate him, anyhow, and give my new mamma my blessing—and we'll meet in Paris next month."

He packed his impedimenta, and made his adieux accordingly. But *l'homme propose, et la femme dispose*, as he always said in looking back, and he was not destined to sip *mazagrins* on the Boulevards again so soon as he thought.

It was a drizzling January afternoon when he reached the Twickenham house; and, springing from the cab, he hurried up the steps. He had neglected to wire that he was arriving, and there had been no one at the station to meet him.

When the servant opened the door, he hastened without inquiry into the drawing-room. The lamps had not been brought in yet, and at first the firelight did not reveal to him that it was occupied: just for a moment.

A woman was standing before the window, looking out upon the lawn and dripping trees. His father was not present.

It was a long room, and his entrance, if unceremonious, had been quiet; she did not hear him till he spoke, the woman who stood with her hands behind her, looking out at the dreary view. Gerald paused an instant in perplexity, he wished that she would turn.

"I beg your pardon," he said: "I—er—I thought my father was here."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, and moved forward with extended hand.

It was most astonishing—she could scarcely have been twenty.

Not twenty, and as pretty as she was young! The man who had come down to "congratulate his mamma" gazed in bewilderment.

"Do sit down," she said, "and I'll ring for lights, and a brandy-and-soda, or whatever else you want. It's odd for me to welcome you, isn't it? I'm glad I wasn't out."

"Er—thank you," said Gerald, gulping. "Er—I'll have tea if you don't mind."

"Tea!" she echoed. Only that this could not be, he would have thought she said it with contempt.

"I—I am very delighted to meet you," he went on. He had been prepared with a filial salute, but withheld it. "My father is well, I hope?"

"Oh yes," she answered, "he'll be sorry he was not at home. We expected you in time for the ceremony, you know. Webber, let us have tea at once, please, and—— won't you have anything laid for you in the dining-room?—No?—and bring in the cigars and cigarettes."

The lamp rays showed her even prettier than he had imagined—a face with a laughing mouth, and eyes that had a suspicion of mischief in them; the complexion of a baby, and the close-cropped curls of a boy. Gerald was fond of his father, but he could not help remembering that he was one of Her Majesty's Judges, and had the gout.

"And what have you been doing?" she asked. "Had a good time?"

"I've seen a great many beautiful things," he said—"a great many wonderful things. One must go abroad to understand what Art really means. In Paris; for instance, the very atmosphere is artistic—I dare say you have noticed it. Here, in London I mean, Art is dead, and we have only its legacies."

"What are the horses like over there?" she inquired: "they don't compare with ours on the whole, do they?"

"I can hardly pretend to be a judge of horseflesh," said Gerald, rather confused; "your own tastes, perhaps——?"

"Oh, I *like* horses and dogs, too," she replied. "I love them! Your father has given me a ripper—a lady's horse, you know, but she's got mettle. You should just see her gallop! I'll take you out to the stable before breakfast in the morning, if you're good."

"That—that's very kind of you," he said, shivering. "I hope you'll always find me very 'good'—I intend to be. By the way, I haven't the least idea what I am to call you; I confess you have rather taken me by surprise. It would be too funny to call you 'mother' wouldn't it?"

She started at the idea, and then laughed merrily.

"Yes," she said, "people might quiz us! Better call me 'Kate,' I suppose, and be done with it."

Gerald smiled also, but awkwardly.

"There doesn't seem much alternative, it's a fact!" he said. "Well, if you don't mind, I'll call you 'Kate.'"

"I hope you'll call me 'nice,' too," she returned, with amusement. "Your father was in an awful funk that you might consider me too young. Do you?"

"I am sure you must know I think you perfectly charming," said Gerald—"most charming—er—er—and delightful."

"You think me a 'duck,' in other words, and that's all about it," she exclaimed, with another peal of laughter. "And you think your father a very lucky man. Oh, my dear Gerald, what a delicious stepson you are!"

The young man turned red and pulled his mustache. She was certainly unconventional, this new wife his father had found.

"Where is my father?" he inquired. "When will he be in?"

"He's had to go away on some business or other," she explained, with surprise. "He won't be 'in,' as you term it, for a fortnight. I thought you knew!"

"Oh," he said blankly, "you don't say so. I'm afraid I shall be in the way."

"Not a bit," she declared. "This is your home, you know, and you must make yourself comfortable till he returns. If you don't he will blame *me*. Indeed," she went on more seriously, "I trust you will always assist me to do my duty by you, my dear boy, and, if I fail in any way, that you won't think it is from any indifference. I feel my responsibility towards you very acutely, I assure you, and am more than anxious to be everything to you that I ought. Now go and dress for dinner," she added. "I am curious to see you in evening clothes."

"You are—'curious'?" he repeated.

"So much depends on a young man's appearance in evening clothes," she said gently. "I really cannot judge of you, or of what you may do in the future, till I have seen you in them."

Gerald went upstairs, and read his father's letter to him for the third time, and questioned dumbly whether anybody concerned in the matter was a lunatic. He felt inclined to pinch himself to ascertain if he were awake.

There was nothing in the parental epistle to suggest insanity. It was brief and to the point:

"MY DEAR GERALD:

"I want you to suspend your interminable art pottering for a few days and come over to assist at my wedding. Yes, my boy, I am going to marry

again. I have not chosen a lady of my own age, so she'll be agile enough to dodge the pillows when the infernal gout is bad. Jestings apart, I am sure you will like her and get on with her; in fact, she will make the house a great deal brighter for you in every way. The ceremony is fixed for a fortnight hence, so hurry up.

"Your very affectionate

"FATHER."

"Good Lord!" murmured Gerald, and then again, "Good Lord!"

He dressed himself in a kind of stupor, and, on descending the stairs, found his stepmother was already in the dining-room, with Webber in attendance.

"I hope I haven't kept you waiting?" he asked.

"Not at all," she said, and began dispensing the soup.

The matronly tone she had adopted at the conclusion of their interview had now given place to her earlier one, and this continued until the sweets had been removed, and they sat *tête-à-tête* discussing dessert. Then she gave a little approving nod:

"Admirable!" she said; "you look admirable, Gerald—you may go far!"

He realized that she was taking a motherly interest in him again and referring to his appearance.

"You may peel me a pear," she said; "or, stay, you want one thing more—I must give you a 'buttonhole.'"

She selected a rosebud with great deliberation and fastened it in his coat.

"You should have an elastic there," she commenced gravely: "a loop is indispensable; all the best tailors use them. Conceive, now, a flower accorded to you as a *gage d'amour*—a young girl yielding you one from her bouquet—could anything be more clumsy, more terrible, than to have to ask her for a pin! See that you always have an elastic loop in future, Gerald; it is necessary."

"I will," he promised. "Anything else?"

"No," she said; "no—unless it is your tie. I see you have on the 'butterfly bow'; its day is done. It is always desirable for a young man to be in the fashion, unless he revives a whim belonging distinctly to a past age. My uncle Marmaduke, for instance, now wears the shape of hat affected in the early 'sixties'; but very few men have the personal magnetism to dare so much as that—very few. Your bow, if I may say so, is at once too modern and too old. You are not offended?"

"I am greatly indebted to you, on the contrary," he said. "I

am certain there must be still another fault. Do let me feel that you have really an interest in me."

She patted him on the arm.

"So far from there being any other fault, I prophesy great things for you. And now, instead of lecturing you any more, I will have some coffee and benedictine and you may smoke."

"Thank you," said Gerald. "You are certain you don't mind?"

"Mind! I will keep you in countenance!" She lapsed all at once into her gayer tone. "I sha'n't shock you, I know. I was always allowed to have just one in private, and your father permits me now. Got a light?"

She popped a cigarette between her lovely lips, and blew a ring of smoke daintily into the air. Gerald began to find these sudden transitions startling.

"What do you say to 'a hundred up?'" she inquired. "I'll play you level for half-a-crown. Or would you rather have some music in the drawing-room?"

"Well," he said, "I'd prefer the music just now, if you'll be so kind; it's rather too soon after dinner for billiards."

"I'll give points, *of course*, if you're doubtful of yourself," she said, quickly. "But between strangers, don't you know, I always think a level game's the fairest."

"I play billiards pretty well," said Gerald, "thanks; but I'm fond of music, and if it's all the same to you——"

"Music be it!" she responded, promptly. "Finish your curaçoa, my dear young friend, and come on."

When she took her seat at the piano she asked him what his favorite songs were, and lifted her eyebrows at his answer.

"Oh! I'll sing you something better than those," she said. "Listen!"

She dashed into a cadenza, and then, with a flash of her eyes across her shoulder at him, burst into "Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road."

"Can't you join in the chorus?" she said. "Oh, you are a duffer! Have you heard Chevalier do it?"

Forsaking the music-stool, she sprang to her feet, and, continuing the verse without an accompaniment, favored him with an impromptu imitation:

"Laughed—there, I thought I should ha' died—
Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road!"

Her voice filled the room; her attitude was indescribably funny. There was something so infectious in her gayety that he did join in the chorus, and they gave it out together till she threw herself exhausted in a chair. When Gerald Singleton retired that night he looked at the walls in stupefaction, and asked, with Bill Nye, "Can these things be?" and the walls returned no answer; and he put the question next day to the heavens, and the heavens were silent also; so that he abandoned the interrogatory at last, and remarked, with Dundreary, that it was one of those puzzles "no fellah could understand." Mrs. Singleton, on the other hand, appeared disturbed with no misgivings about her conduct whatever, and treated him in one moment as if she were a man, and the next as if she were a hundred years old, with unimpaired serenity.

"You ought to marry," she said to him one afternoon, as she sat in a big armchair cracking filberts—"you ought to marry, Gerald. You have everything in your favor; a nice girl with money might be found for you easily enough."

"Marry!" he echoed; "the notion has never entered my head."

"You should think of it, then," she persisted; "we must see what we can do for you. I hope—I do hope—you have no ridiculous ideas on the subject, no romantic tendencies, I mean, to stand in your way?"

"I have no tendencies at all," he replied, a shade irritably. Her worldly wisdom sat oddly on her. "But I shouldn't marry a girl I didn't care for, if she had the wealth of the Indies."

"Then you *have* tendencies?" she exclaimed. "How trying of you! Of course you are very young still; but I imagined you were too sensible for any folly of that kind: I thought you were more practical. My dear boy, you really *ought* to marry money: I have been thinking the matter over very seriously; I do not see what else you can do. You find absolutely no attraction in the Bar, I understand, and Art with you is much less a profession than an amusement. Naturally you will always be independent to a certain extent; but every young man ought to do something for himself in this world. If he can't earn money, he ought to marry it." She jumped up, and shook a lapful of shells into the fender. "You disappoint me, Gerald—you do indeed. What on earth is the difference whether a girl's pretty or not? A pretty face won't give you a good house, my child, nor a park-hack, nor a hunter. Look out for a wife with some-

thing solid in the way of settlements and expectations—that's the advice of your mother to you. And now ring the bell for me, please: the cook is sending me the treacle and brown sugar into the library, and I'm going to make some toffee."

"You are going——? I beg your pardon," gasped Gerald.

"I am going to make toffee—toffee—toffee! Did you never hear of it? Come and see how it's done."

He followed her obediently. He no longer attempted to understand her—he now set down the attempt as waste of time—but in her range of mood, which covered a century or so, there was a fascination he was unable to resist. He even began to pardon Mr. Justice Singleton. She was intoxicating. Whether she were sixteen or sixty, whether she admonished him like his grandmother, or crouched on the hearthrug and scorched her cheeks, stirring treacle in a saucepan on an Abbotsford stove, his stepmother was adorable.

Now, it is entirely to be desired that, if a young man's father marry again, his son shall approve the object of his choice; but if the filial criticism go the length of deeming the lady "adorable," that is *not* to be desired, and threatens, moreover, rocks ahead for the young man's peace of mind. There are certain things we are chary of admitting plainly to ourselves, and Gerald was no more candid than the majority in his reveries; but vaguely, and without putting it into words, he became conscious by degrees that he was thinking of his stepmother far more often and more admiringly than he, she, or his father need require. For a day or two after this occurred to him he said "Nonsense" and "Pooh, pooh;" but a day or two of the undivided society of a girl by whom we are already attracted produces enormous developments, so presently he no longer said "Pooh," and instead blew clouds of meditative "Honey-dew" with drawn brows, and debated how best he could get away.

At this stage, while he was moodily considering what excuse he could offer, an alteration was to be observed in the attitude of Mrs. Singleton. She neither favored him with her ludicrous assumption of maternity now, nor behaved like a schoolgirl. It was hard to realize, but she even appeared to be bashful. Also she avoided him. Once when he called her "Kate" she changed color. A week ago he would have sought an explanation; to-day he refrained—a lack of curiosity from which conclusions may be drawn. The fortnight for which Mr. Justice Singleton was absent had nearly expired, and the fact made Gerald's duty

more difficult. Having waited for his return so long, it looked odd to depart just as he was expected. Nevertheless, the duty was plain, though the path might have its awkwardness; and one morning he descended to the breakfast-room resolved to announce his intention and to act upon it.

She was seated at the table, reading a letter that had come for her. He ignored his own, perceiving she looked pale and disturbed.

"Not bad news, I trust?" he asked.

"No," she said nervously—"no; it is nothing."

She lapsed into reverie, and then blushed vividly as their eyes met.

"Coffee?" she asked.

"Thank you,—yes."

He stirred his cup slowly, and wished Webber out of the room. When they were left alone, however, he still found nothing to say. There was a long silence, which they broke together.

"Gerald——"

"Kate——"

"I beg your pardon," he said. "Please go on."

"It was—— After you."

"I—what I was going to say," he murmured, "is, that I find I must go to town for a few days. It is important."

"At once?" she said.

"Yes, immediately. I hardly know when I shall be back."

He wondered if this were enough, or whether he should proceed to assure her that he should not longer make the house his home. Her next inquiry settled the point.

"You will return in time to receive your father?"

"I shall run down as soon as I hear he has arrived—for the day."

There was another pause. She played restlessly with the flowers in her dress, and twice it seemed as if she were about to speak, yet did not.

"I had something I wished to say to you," she faltered at length. "I hardly know how, yet I want to do it."

"There is nothing I can refuse you, you may be sure," he answered quickly. "If you——"

"It isn't that," she said; "it is that I am—ashamed."

Her face had grown as pale as the lilies that she wore, and her breath came and went unevenly. He leant back watching

her with his heart in his throat, paralyzed with fear of what her extraordinary nature might prompt her to declare.

"It is," she said, with a rush—"it is a confession!"

"There is—— Say nothing!" he exclaimed. "Kate—Mrs. Singleton—don't give me any confidence you may regret, I beg you."

"Oh!" she gasped—"oh!" And then, almost before he understood that she was crying, she covered her face with her hands and ran out of the room.

He sprang up from his chair, and began to pace the floor excitedly. The world was spinning round him. He knew he loved her: he still felt the sob that she had uttered in his own throat. He was conscious that she was coming back to him, and realized that it was impossible for him to leave the house without seeing her again. The servant's steps sounded on the hall, approaching to clear the table. He hurriedly resumed his seat, and on the man's entrance motioned him away. His eyes fell on the unopened letters beside his plate as he did so, and, staring at them, became aware that the top one was from his father.

Abstractedly he opened and commenced to read it. It was dated from Algiers, and reproached him for not returning for the marriage ceremony. He read it through, barely taking in its sense. There was a postscript, and in this a sentence suddenly leaped out from the paper and struck him on the brain. It was:

"If you get back before ourselves, you needn't be afraid of being dull. I don't know if I mentioned it when I wrote before: the young widow I have married has a daughter, who will, of course, make her home with us. She is a desperate tomboy, but good fun."

She was in the drawing-room, and he discovered her.

"May I ask if your letter this morning was from Algiers?" he inquired.

"Yes," she said, starting; "it was."

"And told you that my father would be back very soon, I suspect?"

"To-morrow," she faltered.

"Which was the reason your guilty terror urged you to confess! My father is absent on his honeymoon, and you, I have learnt, are an impostor."

He towered above her like the monument of Justice, and she bowed.

"Are you very angry?" she asked.

"I am more than angry," he explained sternly. "I am indignant! Do you know that you have made me the biggest fool in the county, Miss Kate?"

"You fooled yourself to begin with," she returned defiantly, whisking a tear away. "Taking me for your mother—such nonsense!"

"Are you glad you're not my mother?"

She nodded. "I found you a great trouble," she said.

"As my sister you may like me better," he suggested.

"You are being horrid to me, and I don't like you anyhow."

"Not as a brother?"

She shook her head.

"Nor as a son?"

"I tell you I don't like you any way," she answered. "Let me go."

He slid an arm round her waist, and held her fast.

"Kate," he said, "you've tried me in two capacities, and found me wanting in both. Will you—won't you, if I am very nice to you—one day try me in a third?"

"If you are awfully nice, and always have a loop for your buttonhole," said Kate,— "there's luck in odd numbers—perhaps one day."

And, meeting with no resistance, it was in the third capacity he kissed her.



her with his heart in his throat, paralyzed with fear of what her extraordinary nature might prompt her to declare.

"It is," she said, with a rush—"it is a confession!"

"There is—— Say nothing!" he exclaimed. "Kate—Mrs. Singleton—don't give me any confidence you may regret, I beg you."

"Oh!" she gasped—"oh!" And then, almost before he understood that she was crying, she covered her face with her hands and ran out of the room.

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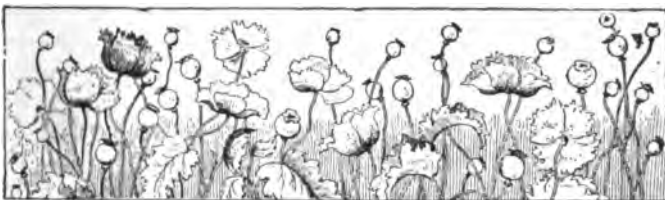
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MASTER CORNILLE'S SECRET *

BY ALPHONSE DAUDET

RANCET MAMAÏ, an old fifer, who occasionally comes and keeps me company far into the night to help me drink my mulled wine, related to me the other evening a little village drama that my mill was a witness of over twenty years ago. The old man's story touched me deeply. I am going to tell it over to you again, just as I heard it.

You must fancy for a moment, dear reader, that you are seated before a steaming, perfumed bowl of wine, and that it is an old fifer who is talking to you.

"This town, my dear sir, was not always the dead, obscure place you see it now. In former days there were a great many mills here, which all carried on a thriving trade. For ten leagues around all the farmers brought their wheat to us to be ground—the hills on every side of the town were covered with windmills. To right or to left there was nothing to be seen but mill-wheels whirling in the mistral, above the pines, and processions of little donkeys, laden with sacks, winding down all the roads; and it was a pleasure to hear, all the week long, the cracking of whips and the loud '*Dia hue!*' of the mill-hands. When Sunday came we would all betake ourselves to the mills in bands. There the millers would stand treat to our fill of muscat wine, and the milleresses were as handsome as queens with their lace fichus and their golden crosses. I always took my fife with me, and the young people would dance the farandole until darkness fell. Those mills, let me tell you, were the joy and prosperity of our town.

"Unfortunately, some capitalists from Paris conceived the idea of establishing a large steam flour-mill on the road to Tarascon. Ah, that brought about a change indeed! The farmers got in the habit of taking their wheat to the steam-mill and the poor

* Translated by Frances Alley Weston, from the French, for Short Stories.—Copyrighted.

windmills were left without a single grain to grind. For some time they tried to struggle along, but steam proved the stronger, and one after the other they were all obliged to shut down. So there were no more processions of little donkeys to be seen; the pretty milleresses had to sell their golden crosses, and there was no more muscat wine, and no more farandole! The mistral could blow as hard as ever it liked, the wheels stood motionless. Then one fine day all the mills were pulled down, and grape-vines and olive-trees were planted where they had been.

"~~But~~ in the midst of the general breaking-up one mill had stood firm, and continued courageously to make its wheels revolve upon its little hill, right in the very teeth of the steam-mill people. It was Master Cornille's mill, the very one in which we are at present holding vigil.

"Master Cornille was an old miller, who had spent fifty years of his life in the dust of flour, and was wrapt up, heart and soul, in his calling. The establishing of the steam-mill very nearly set him crazy. For a week he had run through all the village streets, gathering a crowd around him, and shouting out with all his strength that they were trying to poison all Provence with steam-ground flour.

" 'Don't go to them!' he would cry. 'The rascals make bread by the use of steam, which is an invention of the devil. I work with the *mistral* and the *tramontane*, which are the good God's very breath!' He hit upon plenty of fine phrases like that to the glorification of windmills, but no one would listen to them.

"At last, in impotent wrath, the old man shut himself up in his mill alone, like a wild beast in a cage. He wouldn't even keep with him his granddaughter Vivette, a child of fifteen, who, since the death of her parents, had only her grandfather in the world. The poor little thing was obliged to look out for herself; so she went from farm to farm and got work as she could—in the silk-worm fields or at picking olives. But her grandfather seemed to dearly love the child through it all. He would often walk four leagues in the hot sun to go and see her on some farm where she was working, and when he found her he would sit for hours watching her with tears in his eyes.

"Everyone in the town thought that the old miller had sent Vivette away through avarice, and it was held very much to his discredit that he let his granddaughter wander thus from farm to farm, exposed to the brutalities of overseers and to all the hardships young people in service are obliged to endure. Further-

more, that a man of Master Cornille's reputation, who, previous to that time, had had some self-respect, should appear in the streets as he did now, bare-footed, with holes in his hat and a ragged jacket, like a regular gypsy, exposed him to much remark and criticism. The fact is, when we met him at mass on Sundays, we actually blushed for him, we old people; and Cornille was so well aware of it that he would not come down to the front of the church any more, but stayed back by the font with the poor.

"There was something not at all clear about Master Cornille's mode of life. For a long time not a soul in the village had carried him any wheat, but the wheels of his mill were always going as before. In the evening he could frequently be met driving before him his donkey laden with great sacks of flour.

" 'Good-evening to you, Master Cornille!' the peasants greeted him. 'Busy as ever at the mill?'

" 'Still busy, children,' the old man would reply. 'Thank God, it is not work that's lacking!'

"Then, if he were asked where so much work could come from, he would put his finger on his lips and answer:

" 'Silence! I grind for exportation.'

"Never could anything more be gotten out of him.

"As for any one's venturing to stick his nose into the mill, it was not to be thought of; little Vivette herself never entered it. All one saw if one passed by were the tight-closed doors, the wheels continually in motion, the old donkey grazing about in the clearing outside, and a starved-looking cat sunning itself on the window-ledge and staring at you with a look of distrust.

"There was a certain mystery about all this that set every one talking. Each explained Master Cornille's secret to his own satisfaction, but the general opinion was that there were more bags of coin in the mill than there were sacks of flour. Eventually, however, everything was cleared up, and in this wise:

"One day, while making the young people dance to the music of my fife, I clearly perceived that the eldest of my boys and little Vivette had fallen in love with each other. At heart I was not vexed at the discovery, for, after all, the name of Cornille was an honored one among us; and then, it would please me well to have that little sparrow of a Vivette flitting around my house. But as the children had much occasion to be in each other's society, I thought it best to regularize the situation at once; so I went up the hill to have a word with the grandfather

upon the subject. Ah! the old sorcerer! You should have seen how he received me! It was impossible to get him to open his door. I had to explain my errand, as well as I could, through the keyhole, and all the while that rascally cat was breathing like a forge just above my head.

"The old man did not give me time to finish, but broke in most discourteously to the effect that I had better go back home to my flute; that if I was in a hurry to marry my boy there were plenty of girls to be found at the steam-mills. You may well believe my blood boiled at these unfriendly words; but I was sensible enough to restrain myself, and leaving the old lunatic to his mill, I came back to tell the children the failure of my mission. The poor lambs would not believe me; they begged of me to let them go to the mill and talk to the old grandfather themselves. I had not the courage to refuse, so off went my lovers at full speed.

"It happened that Master Cornille had just left the mill as they arrived there. The door was double-locked, but the old man on leaving had left his ladder standing against the wall outside; and at once the children conceived the idea of getting in by the window and seeing what there could be hidden in this famous mill.

"A singular thing! The mill-room was entirely empty; there was not a sack nor a grain of wheat to be seen, nor any powdering of flour-dust on the walls; nor was there a trace of that warm, pleasant odor of crushed grains, that makes fragrant the vicinity of a mill. The hopper was all covered with dust, and the great, gaunt cat was stretched out on it asleep.

"The room below had the same aspect of poverty and neglect: there was a rickety bed with some rags for covering, a morsel of bread lying on a step of the stairs, and in a corner were two or three torn sacks, through the rents of which white sand and broken bits of plaster were pouring out. This was Master Cornille's secret! It was this rubbish he carried through the streets in the evening to save the honor of his mill and to deceive people into the belief that it still ground flour. Poor mill! Poor Cornille! A long time ago the steam-mill people took their last customer away from them; the wheel was always turning, but it turned an empty mill.

"The children came back all in tears and told me what they had seen. My heart was nearly broken at the story. Without the loss of a moment's time I ran to the neighbors, stated the case to them in half a dozen words, and we all agreed that we

must take at once every bit of grain we had in our lofts to Cornille's mill. No sooner said than done. The whole village set out together, and we arrived on the hill with a long procession of donkeys laden with sacks of wheat—real wheat this time.

"We found the mill wide open. Master Cornille was sitting in front of his door on a sack of plaster, weeping, his head buried in his hands. He had just discovered, on returning home, that some one had effected an entrance to his mill during his absence, and had surprised his miserable secret. 'Poor, poor me,' he was moaning. 'There is nothing left for me to do but die; the mill is dishonored!' And he sobbed pitifully enough to break your heart, calling upon his mill by all sorts of names, talking to it as to a person.

"At this moment the donkeys reached the clearing, and we all began to shout, as in the mill's busy days:

"'Ohé there, at the mill! Ohé, Master Cornille!'

"And we unloaded the donkeys and piled the sacks up in front of the mill-door, and the pretty red grain poured out and scattered all around.

"Master Cornille opened his eyes wide upon us; he took some of the wheat in the hollow of his old hand and shouted, laughing and crying at the same moment:

"'It is wheat, *Seigneur Dieu*, good wheat! Let me have a good look at it!' Then turning toward us:

"'Ah! I knew you would come back to me some day; all those steam-millers are thieves!'

"We were for carrying him to the village in triumph.

"'No, no, my children, I must feed my mill the first thing I do; just think, it is so long since she has had a mouthful to put between her teeth!'

"Tears came in all our eyes as we watched the poor old man run distractedly from one side to the other, cutting open the sacks, and making a close examination of the mill as it pulverized the grain and sent a fine, odorous dust up to the ceiling.

"To do us justice, I must say that, after that day, we never let the old miller lack work. Finally, one morning, Master Cornille died and the wheel of our last windmill ceased to revolve forever. What would you have, monsieur? Everything comes to an end in this world, and it appeared that the days of windmills were over, just as now are ended those of sailing-vessels on the Rhine, Parliaments and flowered waistcoats!"

THE DYNAMITER'S SWEETHEART*

BY GRANT ALLEN



only thing known about her with certainty," said the papers next morning, "is that the wretched woman was an associate of the man Laminski, who is believed to have been the real author of this atrocious outrage. She lodged in the same house with him in the Boulevard St. Michel; she worked at the same studio; the relations between them are described as most cordial; and it is even said that she was engaged to be married to him. By this fortunate disaster society is well rid"—but, there, you know the way the papers talk about these things, and how very little reason there is, as a rule, in all they say of them.

Let me tell you the true story of that sweet little American woman.

She was small and slight: one of those dainty, delicate, *mignonne* New England girls, with shell-like ears and transparent complexions, who look as if they were made of the finest porcelain, yet spring, Heaven knows how, out of rough upland farm-houses. It was in her native Vermont that the hunger of art first came upon Essie Lothrop. You must know America to know just how it came, seizing her by the throat, as it were, one day, among the cows and the apple-harvest, at sight of some early Italian pictures engraved in a magazine. From her childhood upward, to be sure, Essie had drawn pictures for her own delight with a plain lead pencil; drawn the ducks, and the lambs, and the wild orange-lilies that ran riot in the woods; drawn them instinctively, without teaching of any sort, for pure, pure love of them. But these early Italian pictures, then seen for the first time, crossing her simple horizon on the hills of Vermont, roused a fresh fierce thrill in that eager little breast of hers. She had heard of art, from a distance, as a thing glorious and beautiful, which sprang far from New England. Now those four or five wood-cuts in the magazine suggested to her mind unknown pos-

* A selection from "The Strand."

sibilities of artistic beauty. She said to herself at once, "I must know these things. I must see them with my eyes. I must live my life among them."

From that day forth it became a fixed idea with Essie Lothrop that she should go to Paris and study painting. Where Paris was, what Paris could do for her, she only guessed from the meagre details in her common-school geography. But with American intuition she was somehow dimly aware that if you wanted an artistic education, Paris was the one right place to go for it.

"Paris!" her father cried, when she spoke of it first to him, in the field behind the barn; "why, Essie, do tell! That's whar folks are allus gettin' up revolootions, ain't it? An' I guess them furriners is most all Papishes."

"But it's the place to study art, father," Essie cried, with her big eyes wide open. "And I mean to study art, if I have to die for it."

She didn't know how prophetic a word she had spoken.

Thenceforth, however, life meant but one thing to Essie Lothrop. She lived in order to work for the money which would take her to study art in Paris. She was sixteen when that revelation came upon her: she was twenty when she found herself, alone and a stranger, in the streets of the wicked, unheeding city.

Not that she thought it wicked. Essie was too innocent to have any fears in committing herself to the unknown world of Paris. With true American guilelessness, she considered it perfectly natural that a girl of twenty should hire a room for herself, *au cinquième*, in the Boulevard St. Michel, and should present herself as a student at Valentin's studio.

She had learned a little French beforehand in her remote New England home; learned it direct from a book, with just a hint or two as to pronunciation from an older and wiser companion; but she had so much of that strange natural tact which Heaven has been pleased to bestow on New England girls, that she spoke tolerably well even at the very first outset, and quickly picked up a fair Parisian accent in the course of a week or two. Sometimes these frail and transparent-looking Yankee girls have mind enough to do anything they choose to undertake, and certainly Essie Lothrop spoke French at the end of three months with a fluency and purity that would have made most Englishmen stare with astonishment.

There was joy at Valentin's the first morning when Essie made

her appearance. Slight, smiling, demure, with her American ease and her American frankness, she took the fancy of all the men students at once.

"She is good," they said, "the little one!"

When she dropped her brush, it was Stanislas Laminski who picked it up and handed it back to her. She accepted it with a smile, the perfectly courteous and good-humored smile of the girl who had come fresh from her Vermont fields to that great teeming Paris, who knew no middle term between her native village and the Boulevard St. Michel. She thought no evil. To her, these men were just fellow-students, as the Vermont boys had been in the common-school of her township. She took their obtrusive politeness as her natural due, never dreaming Jean and Alphonse could mean anything more by it than Joe and Pete would have meant in her upland hamlet.

"Is she droll, the little one?" the men students said at first, when she gravely allowed them to carry her things back for her to her room *au cinquième*, and even invited them in with smiling grace to share her cup of tea—those noisy youths, who lived upon nothing but cigarettes and absinthe. They looked at one another shamefacedly, and stifled their smiles; then they answered: "Merci, mademoiselle, we do not drink tea. But we thank you from the heart for your amiable hospitality."

They bowed and withdrew, Laminski last of all, with a side glance over his shoulder. Then, when they reached the bottom of the five flights of stairs, they burst out laughing simultaneously. But it was a deprecatory laugh. "Is she innocent, the American? She asked us to tea! Hein, Jules, my boy! hein, Alphonse! that was a rich one, wasn't it?"

But Laminski lingered behind, and looked up at her window.

As for Essie, she sat down, not one atom abashed, to think over her first day's adventures in the studio. An English girl under the circumstances would have been terribly oppressed by a vague sense of loneliness. But Essie was not. It is the genius of her countrywomen. She sat down and smiled to herself at her day's work, contentedly. What nice, friendly young men they had all been, to be sure, and how polite they had seemed to her! And Valentin himself had looked approvingly at her first essay, and had muttered to himself, "She will do, the little one." How delicious to be really in Paris, where men and women learn art, and to feel yourself in touch with all those great masters in the Louvre and the Luxembourg!

Essie was quite at home as once, as she brewed her tea, and drank it by herself in her room *au cinquième*. Only, she was half sorry to be quite alone that first afternoon; what a pity those good-looking, nice-mannered young men hadn't really dropped in to share a friendly cup with her!

Next morning she was back at the studio early, neat and demure as ever, her golden hair wound up in the most artistic coil with charming freedom, and her sweet child's face beaming innocent welcome to the men as they entered. The girls looked more coldly at her, and gave her a stiff bow; but only that second day. Before a week was out they understood "the American," and vaguely felt that though her code of proprieties was quite other than their own—she came without a chaperon—yet she was entirely *comme il faut*, and a dear little thing into the bargain also. They never interfered with her; they let her come and go, recognizing the fact that, after all, Americans were Americans, and "*que voulez-vous, ma chère? C'est comme ça là-bas, allez!*"

Valentin approved of her.

"That child will go far," he said sometimes, confidentially to Stanislas Laminski. "She has talent, do you see? Talent! bah, she has genius. She has learnt nothing, of course; but she will learn; she is plastic. There's more originality in that child's little finger than in all that fat Kérouac's Breton body. Ah, yes, she will go far, if you others leave her alone. She is innocent, the little one; respect her innocence."

Laminski sat next her and painted by her side. He did his best to help her. Often he pointed out to her when things she did were technically wrong; set her right in her drawing, corrected her first crude ideas of color. Essie, living for art, put her head on one side and drank it all in eagerly. She was docile like a child; she saw these men knew more about it than she did, and she was anxious to profit as far as possible by their instruction. Laminski liked her; she was so small and so pretty. Like a dainty little flower, Laminski thought to himself. With an artist's eye, with a poet's heart, how could he help admiring her?

One afternoon he walked home with her, and carried her things for her. At the top of the stairs, she turned and took them from him, smiling. "Will you come in and rest awhile, monsieur?" she asked, with her innocent frankness. Laminski hesitated. The others were not by. After all, what harm?

Why not accept that innocent invitation in the spirit in which she gave it?

He stammered out a vague acquiescence. Essie flung open the door and preceded him into the room. It was a bedroom of the common Parisian Jack-of-all-trades sort, with the bed huddled away into a niche in the background, and the rest of the apartment furnished like a *salon*. Essie waved him to the sofa. He seated himself on it, gingerly, very close to the edge, as if half afraid of making himself too comfortable. Essie noticed it and laughed. "But why so?" she asked merrily. Then her eye fell on an envelope on the table close by. "Ah! a letter from Dicky!" she cried, and took it up and opened it.

"And who is Dicky?" Laminski asked, gazing hard at her, inquiringly.

"My brother," Essie answered, devouring the letter. "He tells me all about our farm, and my father, and the chickens."

The young man leaned back and watched her respectfully with a stifled smile, till she had finished reading it. She went through with it unaffectedly to the end, and then laid it down, glowing. Laminski was charmed at so much natural simplicity.

"Dicky tells me all about our pets at the farm," she said, simply; and to Laminski the mere mention of the farm was delicious in its *naïveté*. "He tells me about my ducks, and how our neighbor has broken his arm, and that Biddy, the servant" (at home she would have said the "hired girl") "is engaged to be married."

Then she felt amused herself, to observe how formal all these domestic details of Vermont society sounded, even in her own ears, when one made French prose of them. But to Laminski, they were still stray breaths of Arcadia.

"I suppose you Russians can hardly understand what America's like," she added, after a pause, just to keep conversation rolling, "but we Americans love it."

Laminski started back like one stung. "Mademoiselle!" he cried, angrily.

"What have I done?" Essie asked, drawing away in surprise. "What have I said? Why do you start? Surely we Americans can love America?"

"*À la bonne heure!*" he answered, gazing hard at her in a strange way. "But why treat me like this? Why call me a Russian?"

"I thought you were one, from your name," Essie replied, taken aback. "Isn't Laminski Russian?"

"Thank Heaven, no," the dark young man answered, with a fierce flash of the eyes. "I'm a Pole, mademoiselle, and, like all good Poles, I hate and detest Russia. Call me a Chinaman, if you will, a negro, a monkey; but not a Russian."

"But isn't the Czar your Emperor, too?" Essie inquired, innocently. She was too unversed in European affairs to understand that a Pole could differ from a Russian otherwise than as a Californian differs from a New Englander.

Laminski suppressed an oath. Then he went on to explain to her in brief but sufficiently vigorous terms the actual state of feeling between Poles and Russians. Essie listened with the intent interest of the intelligent American; for, as a rule with the average Yankee, you may feel pretty sure of finding that he is absolutely ignorant of any piece of information you may desire to impart to him, but eagerly anxious to know all about it. A great desire to learn and capacity for learning co-exist with an astounding want of information and culture.

"Then you are a Catholic?" Essie said, at last, after listening to his explanation with profound interest.

The young man gazed at her with an expression of amused surprise. "I am of whatever religion mademoiselle prefers," he answered, courteously—"except only the religion of the accursed Russians."

"I don't understand you," Essie said, much puzzled. Such easy-going gallantry was remote, indeed, from the sober, God-fearing New England model.

Laminski smiled again. "Well, we advanced politicians in Europe," he said, twirling his black mustache, "don't, as a rule, belong to any religion in particular—unless it be the religion of the ladies who interest us."

"Oh, how very sad," Essie replied, looking hard at him, pityingly. "But perhaps you may see clearer in time."

"Perhaps," Laminski answered, with a curious puckering of the corners of his mouth. "Though I hardly expect it."

"Will you take some tea?" Essie asked, just to relieve the tension. For the first time in her life she was dimly aware of that barrier of sex which she had never felt with the young men in Vermont. But these European men are so strange and so different! They always make you remember, somehow, that *they* are men and that *you* are a *woman*!

"Thank you," he replied; "mademoiselle is very good." And he sat looking on while Essie prepared it.

When it was ready he tasted it. He had drunk tea in quantities when he was a boy near Warsaw, but never since the first day he came to Paris. "How innocent it is!" he exclaimed, as he tasted it. And Essie stared again, not knowing what to make of him.

From that day forth it was the gossip of the *atelier* that Laminski had his eyes upon the little American. He walked home with her daily; he took her to *cafés* more reputable than was his wont; he escorted her on Sundays to the Louvre and to Cluny. The other girl students gave her dark hints at times, which Essie did not understand, of some mysterious danger which they seemed to think lay in intercourse with Laminski, or, for the matter of that, with any of the other men who frequented the studio. But the dark hints glided unnoticed past Essie. Clad in her triple mail of New England innocence, she never even guessed what the hinters were driving at. These men were gentlemen (as Essie understood the word), students of art like herself; and why should a self-respecting girl be afraid or ashamed of accepting their kind escort to the *café* or the theatre? She walked unharmed through the midst of that strange, unconventional, Bohemian Paris, as unconventional as itself, by dint of pure innate goodness and simplicity.

The strangest part of it all was that the men themselves were silenced by her innocence. "*Chut!* Not a word of that!" *gros Kérouac* would exclaim to the laughing group around him as Essie entered; "here comes the little one!" and, instantly, a demure silence fell on the noisy crowd; or, if they laughed after that, they laughed at something where Essie's own silvery voice could join them merrily.

"As for Laminski, he is reformed," Alphonse said more than once, with a shrug, to Jules. "You would not know that man. He half forgets the Dead Rat, and hasn't been seen for fifteen days at Bruant's."

Month by month went on, and indeed a strange change had come over Laminski. He stopped away more and more from the *cafés chantants* and the open-air balls; he was found continually till late hours of the evening at Essie Lothrop's apartment. "And mind you," said Alphonse, "what is strange, it is all for the good motive. Laminski reformed! Is it a good one, that? Take my word for it, comrades, he will marry her, at church, and settle down into a *brave bourgeois*."

Meanwhile, Essie painted. Oh, how Essie painted! Valentin's heart rejoiced. Since Marie Bashkirtseff, no *atelier* in Paris had had such a promising woman pupil. And Laminski painted, too; the pair of them, side by side: she, with grace and refinement; he, with fiery force and Slavonic vigor.

At last the other students began to murmur that if that went much further, *allons!* that would end by compromising the little one. Laminski's brow clouded when they spoke these things darkly; and when Laminski was angry it boded no good to anyone. However, in order that nobody should ever say he was seen too often coming down the stairs of that angel's house, he adopted an excellent and saving device: he removed from madame's, that Bohemian pension, and took a room *au sixième*, just above Essie's, in the self-same house in the Boulevard St. Michel. Sacred name of a dog, nobody can blame a man for being seen at night about his own apartments.

And then, he employed his spare hours at night by painting Essie as Ste. Geneviève in a great historical composition.

What wonder that Essie Lothrop fell in love with him? All men are human; still more, all women. He was so handsome, so clever, so fiery, so incomprehensible, so utterly unlike the young men in New England. That very incomprehensibility was a point in his favor; it appealed to woman's love of the mysterious and the infinite. Besides, Alphonse was right. Strange to say, Laminski meant it all for the good motive. The more he looked at her, the more vividly did he feel that fate, blind fate, was drawing him against his will to marry that pure and beautiful girl—to marry her at church, like any ordinary *bourgeois*.

They never exactly arranged it. It grew up between them imperceptibly. As he painted her in her simple white robe as Ste. Geneviève, they found themselves addressing one another as Essie and Stanislas, *presque sans le savoir*.

But step by step they both of them came to regard it as natural—nay, almost inevitable. Essie admired him unspeakably, and, indeed, there was much to admire in Laminski. A man who could paint with such poetical feeling, who could make such sweet fancies breathe upon canvas, must have much that was good in him. And then, his fiery eloquence! Essie loved to hear him, when work was over, pouring forth his untamable Slavonic soul in torrent floods of denunciation against tyrants. She didn't know much about this European world, to be sure, but she had been taught to believe that tyrants were plentiful as

blackberries in Europe. Here, in France, of course, we were living under a Republic, which made it almost as good as America. But Russia and Germany, and all those other outlying countries—well, Stanislas told her the Czar was a monster, and she had read Mr. Kennan's articles in the *Century*, and could well believe it.

Once or twice a week, however, it was Stanislas's way to go out at night to some mysterious meeting. On such occasions Essie asked him what society he frequented. Laminski smiled a curiously self-restrained smile, and answered in a somewhat evasive voice that it had something to do with the Friends of Freedom. These Friends of Freedom were often on his lips. Essie didn't exactly know what they were driving at, but she took their plan to be some benevolent scheme for emancipating the people of Poland by touching the hearts of the Russian officials. She fancied they disseminated humanitarian tracts, and in that bland belief she went on, unconcerned, with her painting at Valentin's. It was all very dreadful, no doubt, as Stanislas said, this European tyranny; but, with art at her door, she couldn't pretend to interest herself in politics. Her heart was absorbed in her work and in Stanislas.

Yet she loved his rhetoric. She loved to see him stop in the very act of painting Ste. Geneviève's halo; loved to see him stand, palette on his thumb, in his room *au sixième*, and enforce with aggressive and demonstrative paint-brush his angry charge against the crimes of the *bourgeoisie*. Who the *bourgeoisie* might be Essie didn't quite know, but she understood them to be wicked oppressors of the poor, which, of course, was quite enough to justify Stanislas's righteous indignation. He looked so handsome when he opened the vials of wrath on the heads of the *bourgeoisie* that Essie just loved to see and hear him demolish them. Nothing could be too bad for those wicked creatures if half of what Stanislas said was true about them.

By and by, while Essie was still working at Valentin's, and Laminski was vaguely reflecting upon the ways and means by which at last to marry her, all Paris was startled one memorable morning by the terrible news of an Anarchist bomb outrage. It was the first that had taken place since Essie's arrival, and it shocked and surprised her. To think people should act with such reckless folly!

At Valentin's that day, when the news came in, all was hubbub and excitement. Alphonse and the *gros Kérouac* were distinctly

of the opinion that the Government should do something. Anarchists should be caught and fried in butter. The Gascon surmised that it would not be a bad plan to cut them bit by bit into little square pièces in the Place de la Concorde as a warning to others. Valentin himself suggested, with grotesque minuteness, that they might be utilized for purposes of artistic study, by slow torture in *ateliers*, as models for gladiatorial pieces or Christian martyrdoms. Only Laminski held his tongue and shrugged his shoulders philosophically. He appeared to be neither surprised nor shocked at the tidings of the outrage. He was interested chiefly in the subsidiary question of what arrests had been made; and when the paper came in—extra special, hot pressed—he glanced at it with some concern, read the names and the descriptions of the three workmen “detained on suspicion,” and, lighting a cigarette, with a nonchalant air, went on with his painting.

At home at the Boulevard St. Michel that evening, Essie spoke with some natural horror and loathing of this meaningless explosion.

“How detestable,” she cried, “to fling a bomb like that in an open place, where you may injure anybody! So wrong, and so silly! I hope they’ve caught the wicked people who did it!”

Stanislas gazed at her with deep eyes of tender commiseration. He laid his hand on her golden head.

“My child,” he said, caressingly, “you don’t understand these questions of politics. How should you, indeed, who are a pure daughter of the people, a child of toil, born in a free land, from brave tillers of the soil, who cast off long since the rotten fetters of tyranny? It is otherwise in Europe. Here we have to fight a hard battle against the strong. We must use such poor arms as tyrants leave us. All is fair in war, and it is open war now between the *bourgeoisie* and the Friends of Liberty. They would kill us if they could; we will kill them in return for it. You see, it is all a fair field and no favor.”

“But, Stanislas,” Essie cried, “you don’t mean to say you approve of these wretches who maim and destroy innocent women and children? If their bombs only blew up tyrants—I don’t know about that; you see, I’m a woman, and I never pretend to understand politics. America, of course, is a free country.” (Essie really believed it.) “We have no tyrants. And if all you tell me about tyrants is true, I can almost understand how people who have lost their own fathers or sons by the despots’ commands, might do anything almost to get rid of such

wretches. But this is a Republic, where people are quite free, and I don't know why the Friends of Liberty should want to kill poor, helpless souls, sitting by chance at a *café*—good folks who, perhaps, may hate the tyrants just as much as they do. I don't see the use of indiscriminate revolution."

Stanislas ran his fingers gently over the smooth, bright locks. It was charming to hear her in defense of the *bourgeoisie*. The difference between their natures took his fancy, just as much as it had taken Essie's.

"You don't understand these things, my child," he said, fondling her affectionately. "By and by, when you've lived a little longer in Europe, and when I've had time to unfold my ideas to you slowly, you'll take a more sensible view of the matter. But, after all, why discuss it? Sit down in your chair by my side here, little one, and let me go on reading you those lines of Victor Hugo's."

Still, for the next few weeks, in spite of what he said, a vague uneasiness oppressed poor Essie. It was dreadful to think that dear Stanislas, who wouldn't himself have injured a mouse, should seem to palliate, and even to condone, the hateful crimes of these detestable Anarchists. It was dreadful, too, that he should speak of the people who perpetrated such acts by the same name as the one he applied to his own associates, the Friends of Freedom. Moreover, Essie noticed that during those next few weeks, while outrages were attempted in various parts of Paris, Stanislas went out more frequently than ever to his nocturnal meetings. Strange men came and went most mysteriously *au sixième*. It quite distressed her. Dear Stanislas was so good, she knew he could find excuses for the wickedest creatures, and she loved him for his charity. But she urged upon him, often, that the Friends of Freedom should protest in the strongest possible terms against these hateful crimes that were now being perpetrated every day around them. The more earnestly she spoke, the more did Stanislas smile and pinch her little ear: but he answered gravely that she was quite right, and, if only he knew how, he would do his best to prevent such outrages. Yet what could he say that was of any avail? They worked underground in darkness and silence; not even the police could discover the lairs of these secret conspirators.

So things went on for a week or two. To Essie's great delight, the more she talked about the wickedness of dynamite, the more frankly did Stanislas begin to agree with her. She could

quite understand how his poetic mind, misled just at first by its hatred of tyrants, had failed to dwell enough at the earliest outset upon the atrocity of these outrages. But it was all coming home to him. She hoped she had made him feel how wicked these men were, and had enlisted the sympathies of the Friends of Liberty on the side of the poor creatures who sat unthinking in the *cafés* or churches which the Anarchists menaced.

At last, one night, a little incident happened which filled Essie's soul with unspeakable forebodings. It was a beautiful spring evening; the horse-chestnuts were in bloom; she leaned out of her window and looked forth upon the boulevard. All the world was promenading. In the distance she saw Stanislas, coming from the direction of the great corner fountain, and by his side another man, with whom he was talking earnestly. How handsome he looked, and how vivid, dear Stanislas; she loved to see him when he talked with such eagerness. She watched them down the road; they approached the house. Stanislas was carrying a basket with singular care. Essie followed them with her eyes till they reached the gateway. She heard them on the stairs, still conversing closely. Pure curiosity impelled her to go to her door which opened upon the landing, and say "*Bonsoir*" to Stanislas. As she looked out, Stanislas's eyes caught hers. He raised his hat mechanically. As he did so, he gave a start. He seemed troubled and disquieted. For a second the basket almost dropped from his hands; the other man caught it hastily away, with a gesture of horror not unmixed with anger. He said something aloud in Polish, which Essie did not understand. But she knew what it meant, for all that. It meant, "Take care, stupid!" And then, after a pause, "That was a narrow escape, that time!"

Yet even so, she had no glimpse of the truth. She merely felt in some dim way this was a Friend of Liberty, and that Stanislas and he were engaged in animated political discussion. She shrank back, abashed that she should have seemed to dear Stanislas to have been spying and eavesdropping. Her one strong feeling was a feeling of self-reproach for the obvious untimeliness of her awkward intervention.

The man stopped upstairs in Stanislas's room for two long hours; and Essie, listening hard, could hear no voices. That was odd, for, as a rule, when dear Stanislas's friends came, be they Poles or painters, they were noisy enough in all conscience, as she could hear for herself without any need for listening.

But this evening, not a sound. What on earth could it mean? Essie's heart stood still. Could they be whispering together? And if whispering, what then? Must not that mean plotting? Plotting to get rid of that terrible Czar? Essie's tender little soul couldn't bear to think of it.

At last the man went. Essie heard Stanislas come to the door to say "Good-night" to him. "*Au revoir, comrade!*" "*Au revoir, Laminski! Courage, mon ami!*" and then—the heavy footsteps.

As soon as they had died away, Essie could stand it no longer. She stole quietly upstairs, and knocked a gentle knock at Stanislas's door. There was a moment's pause; then, slowly, hesitatingly, it opened an inch, and through that timid chink a white face looked out at her. Oh, so white and terrified! Who could ever have believed Stanislas Laminski's face could grow in a moment so transformed and unbeautified? It frightened her to see it. But as for Stanislas himself, after a second's pause, he became suddenly calm; his color returned, and he burst out laughing. It was a foolish laugh, such as often comes upon one in the moment of reaction after a passing terror. "Ho, it's you, then, dear little one?" he cried, much relieved, bundling something away hurriedly, and closing the cupboard door. "You took me by surprise. I thought it was the *concierge*, come to ask for my rent, which I hadn't got ready for him."

Essie looked in his face, and knew he was playing with her. But her own self-respect wouldn't allow her to say so to him. She only gave a glance of those innocent eyes, and asked him, earnestly: "Stanislas, you *must* tell me! What had you just now on the stairs in that basket?"

He gazed at her once more with a tender yet mocking smile. "My little one," he said, "it was thus that Eve fell: you have too much curiosity. Eggs, eggs, my dear Essie; and I was afraid of breaking them. See, here is the proof: I've been making an omelette for Lorikoff's supper." And he held up the dish, a small frying-pan, before her.

"Stanislas," she cried, drawing back, "you are deceiving me! I know you are playing with me. You ought to tell me this. I can't think what to make of it."

He laid his gentle hand on her bright head once more. "Essie, darling," he said, "I told you long ago, you don't understand, and will never understand, European politics."

She let him draw her to his side and kiss her pale and

troubled forehead. But that was all. Then she broke away from him, sobbing. With a heavy heart she rushed downstairs to the lonely solitude of her own little bedroom. For the first time in her life, since she came to Paris, she was aware of her loneliness. Oh! why had she ever left her dear, quiet Vermont to come and study art in this terrible Europe?

All night long she lay awake. Yet even so, she never for one moment suspected the worst. She never once realized it. She only knew that Stanislas had some grave political secret he would not reveal to her, and she feared if she knew it she would greatly disapprove of it.

Next day was Sunday. Stanislas had told her before he would be engaged next morning, and she watched at the window to see him go out—sat and watched, she knew not why, in an agony of foreboding. At last she heard his step, light and resonant, on the staircase. He did not look in as he passed to say "Good-morning." That increased her suspicion, for 'twas Stanislas's way, even when going to his political meetings, to "take his sailing orders," as he playfully phrased it. This time he went rapidly out, without saying a word, and emerged in the street. He was carrying something in the pocket of his coat, nursing it tenderly as he went. Essie's heart stood still. What could Stanislas be bent upon?

She couldn't bear the suspense. She snatched up her hat and hurried eagerly after him.

As for Stanislas himself, he was by no means in a hurry. He strolled gently along, selecting the least crowded side of the street, and carefully avoiding contact with anybody. Essie followed him, unperceived, dogging his steps as he went, but pausing behind the trees that lined the boulevard whenever he looked behind him with a glance of caution. Even now, she hardly knew what it all could mean; she could not believe such horrors of anyone with whom she herself had mixed on terms of affection. Her simple little New England mind could not grasp the full awesomeness of Continental Anarchy.

Laminski crossed the Pont St. Michel, with a careless glance at Notre Dame as he passed, and took his way along the quays of the North Bank, by the least crowded side, in the direction of the Louvre. Essie followed him, breathless. At the corner by St. Germain l'Auxerrois, the man who had spent so long a time with him the night before stood idly lounging. Essie knew him in a moment. As they passed one another, the two men gave a

nod of recognition, with a meaning glance. The stranger's eyes seemed to ask, "Is everything ready?" Laminski's answered, mutely, "Yes, ready, quite ready."

They took no further heed of one another; but Essie noticed that when Stanislas had passed on twenty yards or thereabouts, the other man followed him, just as she herself was doing, with an attentive air, as who should say, "I will watch that you do it."

Stanislas turned aside towards the church doors of St. Germain. The bells chimed merrily. People were flocking in and out to mass. Essie stood still and trembled.

Stanislas took a little bottle half imperceptibly between his left finger and thumb, and fumbled for a second with the unseen object in his coat pocket. Then he turned round with a look of recognition and triumph toward the other man in the background. "See here," he seemed to say; "I am keeping our compact." At the very same instant, his eye lighted on Essie. Suddenly his hand faltered; his cheek grew pale; the dare-devil look faded fast out of his eyes, and a terrible fear seemed to come over him at sight of her.

Essie felt she *must* find out what it meant. She rushed up to him imploringly. Stanislas held a long, round cylinder of iron in his hand. With a gesture of fierce love Essie flung her arms round him. His face grew deadly white. He tried to unwind her arms. "Take care, darling!" he cried. "Run as far as you can! If it explodes, it kills you. It is not for such as you. Go, go; it's loaded."

He raised his arm to fling it. A bomb! a bomb! Essie knew what it meant now. A ghastly light burst in upon her. These, then, were the methods of the Friends of Freedom! She seized his hand in her horror.

"Stanislas," she cried, wildly, "you shall not do it. You shall not burden your soul with that awful crime. Though I die I will save them. Though I die, I will save you." And she caught it in her hands and tore it fiercely away from him.

"Essie, Essie," he shrieked, in an access of mad remorse, "it's going to burst! Fling it away! Fling it away from you!"

But Essie held it still, and rushed out with a sudden thrill of heroic resolve into the wide open space between St. Germain and the Louvre. She waved one arm around. "Danger! Danger!" she shouted.

The crowd, aghast, fell back to left and right. Stanislas

rushed after her, and strove to wrench it from her grasp. But just as he approached her, Essie dashed it on the pavement by the rails of the Louvre, well away from the crowd of awe-struck people. Whatever came of it, she would save those innocent lives, she would save that guilty soul from the consequences of its own unholy endeavor.

A crash! A flash! A white cloud of dense smoke! Stanislas Laminski clapped his hands before his face. Essie stood there, immovable. When the cloud cleared away, broken fragments littered the pavement by the rails, and two bleeding corpses lay mangled on the ground—Laminski's and Essie's. Not one other was hurt. She had saved the innocent.

"She meant to set fire to the Louvre," said the papers; "but owing to a fortunate scuffle with her accomplice, the bomb exploded prematurely."





THE LOST CHILD*

BY FRANÇOIS COPPÉE



ON that morning, which was the morning before Christmas, two important events happened simultaneously—the sun rose, and so did M. Jean-Baptiste Godefroy.

Unquestionably the sun, illuminating suddenly the whole of Paris with its morning rays, is an old friend, regarded with affection by everybody. It is particularly welcome after a fortnight of misty atmosphere and gray skies, when the wind has cleared the air and allowed the sun's rays to reach the earth again. Besides all of which the sun is a person of importance. Formerly, he was regarded as a god, and was called Osiris, Apollyon, and I don't know what else. But do not imagine that because the sun is so important he is of greater influence than M. Jean-Baptiste Godefroy, millionaire banker, director of the *Comptoir Général de Crédit*, administrator of several big companies, deputy and member of the General Counsel of the Eure, officer of the Legion of Honor, etc., etc. And whatever opinion the sun may

* Translated from the French, for Short Stories, by J. Matthewman. Illustrated by Helen M. Armstrong.—Copyrighted.

have about himself, he certainly has not a higher opinion than M. Jean-Baptiste Godefroy has of *himself*. So we are authorized to state, and we consider ourselves justified in stating, that on the morning in question, at about a quarter to eight, the sun and M. Jean-Baptiste Godefroy rose.

Certainly the manner of rising of these two great powers mentioned was not the same. The good old sun began by doing a great many pretty actions. As the sleet had, during the night, covered the bare branches of the trees in the boulevard Malesherbes, where the *hôtel* Godefroy is situated, with a powdered coating, the great magician sun amused himself by transforming the branches into great bouquets of red coral. At the same time he scattered his rays impartially on those poor passers-by whom necessity sent out, so early in the morning, to gain their daily bread. He even had a smile for the poor clerk, who, in a thin overcoat, was hurrying to his office, as well as for the *grisette*, shivering under her thin, insufficient clothing; for the workman carrying half a loaf under his arm, for the car-conductor as he punched the tickets, and for the dealer in roast chestnuts, who was roasting his first panful. In short, the sun gave pleasure to everybody in the world. M. Jean-Baptiste Godefroy, on the contrary, rose in quite a different frame of mind. On the previous evening he had dined with the Minister for Agriculture. The dinner, from the removal of the *potage* to the salad, bristled with truffles, and the banker's stomach, aged forty-seven years, experienced the burning and biting of pyrosis. So the manner in which M. Jean-Baptiste Godefroy rang for his valet-de-chambre was so expressive, that as he got some warm water for his master's shaving, Charles said to the kitchen-maid:

"There he goes! The monkey is barbarously ill-tempered again this morning. My poor Gertrude, we're going to have a miserable day."

Whereupon, walking on tip-toe, with eyes modestly cast down, he entered the chamber of his master, opened the curtains, lit the fire, and made all the necessary preparations for the toilette, with the discreet demeanor and respectful gestures of a sacristan placing the sacred vessels on the altar for the priest.

"What sort of weather this morning?" demanded M. Godefroy curtly, as he buttoned his undervest of gray swandown upon a stomach that was already a little too prominent.

"Very cold, sir," replied Charles meekly. "At six o'clock the thermometer marked 7 degrees above zero. But, as you will see,

sir, the sky is quite clear, and I think we are going to have a fine morning."

In stropping his razor, M. Godefroy approached the window, drew aside one of the hangings, looked on the boulevard, which was bathed in brightness, and made a slight grimace which bore some resemblance to a smile.

It is all very well to be perfectly stiff and correct, and to know that it is bad taste to show feeling of any kind in the presence of domestics, but the appearance of the roguish sun, in the middle of December, sends such a glow of warmth to the heart that it is impossible to disguise the fact. So M. Godefroy deigned, as before observed, to smile. If some one had whispered to the opulent banker that his smile had anything in common with that of the printer's boy, who was enjoying himself by making a slide on the pavement, M. Godefroy would have been highly incensed. But it really was so, all the same; and during the space of one minute this man, who was so occupied by business matters, this leading light in the financial and political worlds, indulged in the childish pastime of watching the passers-by, and following with his eyes the files of conveyances as they gayly rolled in the sunshine.

But pray do not be alarmed. Such a weakness could not last long. People of no account, and those who have nothing to do, may be able to let their time slip by in doing nothing. It is very well for women, children, poets and riffraff. M. Godefroy had other fish to fry; and the work of the day which was commencing promised to be exceptionally heavy. From half-past eight to ten o'clock he had a meeting at his office with a certain number of gentlemen, all of whom bore a striking resemblance to M. Godefroy. Like him, they were very nervous; they had risen with the sun, they were all *blasés*, and they all had the same object in view—to gain money. After breakfast (which he took after the meeting), M. Godefroy had to leap into his carriage and rush to the Bourse to exchange a few words with other gentlemen who had also risen at dawn, but who had not the least spark of imagination among them. (The conversations were always on the same subject—money.) From there, without losing an instant, M. Godefroy went to preside over another meeting of acquaintances entirely void of compassion and tenderness. The meeting was held round a baize-covered table, which was strewn with heaps of papers and well provided with ink-wells. The conversation again turned on money, and various methods of gaining it. After

the aforesaid meeting he, in his capacity of deputy, had to appear before several commissions (always held in rooms where there were baize-covered tables and ink-wells and heaps of papers). There he found men as devoid of sentiment as he was, all utterly incapable of neglecting any occasion of gaining money, but who, nevertheless, had the extreme goodness to sacrifice several hours of the afternoon to the glory of France.

After having quickly shaved he donned a morning suit, the elegant cut and finish of which showed that the old beau of nearly fifty had not ceased trying to please. When he shaved he spared the narrow strip of pepper-and-salt beard round his chin, as it gave him the air of a trustworthy family man in the eyes of the Arrogants and of fools in general. Then he descended to his cabinet, where he received the file of men who were entirely occupied by one thought—that of augmenting their capital. These gentlemen discussed several projected enterprises, all of them of considerable importance, notably that of a new railroad to be laid across a wild desert. Another scheme was for the founding of monster works in the environs of Paris, another of a mine to be worked in one of the South American republics. It goes without saying that no one asked if the railway would have passengers or goods to carry, or if the proposed works should manufacture cotton nightcaps or distil whiskey; whether the mine was to be of virgin gold or of second-rate copper: certainly not. The conversation of M. Godefroy's morning callers turned exclusively upon the profits which it would be possible to realize during the week which should follow the issue of the shares. They discussed particularly the values of the shares, which they knew would be destined before long to be worth less than the paper on which they were printed in fine style.

These conversations, bristling with figures, lasted till ten o'clock precisely, and then the director of the *Comptoir Général de Crédit*, who, by the way, was an honest man—at least, as honest as is to be found in business—courteously conducted his last visitor to the head of the stairway. The visitor named was an old villain, as rich as Croesus, who, by a not uncommon chance, enjoyed the general esteem of the public; whereas, had justice been done to him, he would have been lodging at the expense of the State in one of those large establishments provided by a thoughtful government for smaller delinquents; and there he would have pursued a useful and healthy calling for a

lengthy period, the exact length having been fixed by the judges of the supreme court. But M. Godefroy showed him out relentlessly, notwithstanding his importance—it was absolutely necessary to be at the Bourse at 11 o'clock—and went into the dining-room.

It was a luxuriously-furnished room. The furniture and plate would have served to endow a cathedral. Nevertheless, notwithstanding that M. Godefroy took a gulp of bi-carbonate of soda, his indigestion refused to subside, consequently the banker could only take the scantiest breakfast—that of a dyspeptic. In the midst of such luxury, and under the eye of a well-paid butler, M. Godefroy could only eat a couple of boiled eggs, and nibble a little mutton-chop. The man of money trifled with dessert—took only a crumb of Roquefort—not more than two cents' worth. Then the door opened and an overdressed but charming little child—young Raoul, four years old—the son of the company director, entered the room, accompanied by his German nursery-governess.

This event occurred every day at the same hour—a quarter to eleven, precisely, while the carriage which was to take the banker to the Bourse was awaiting the gentleman who had only a quarter of an hour to give to paternal sentiment. It was not that he did not love his son. He did love him—nay, he adored him, in his own particular way. But then, you know, business is business.

At the age of forty-two, when already worldly-wise and *blasé*, he had fancied himself in love with the daughter of one of his club-friends—Marquis de Neufontaine, an old rascal—a nobleman, but one whose card-playing was more than open to suspicion, and who would have been expelled from the club more than once, but for the influence of M. Godefroy. The nobleman was only too happy to become the father-in-law of a man who would pay his debts, and without any scruples he handed over his daughter—a simple and ingenuous child of seventeen, who was taken from a convent to be married—to the worldly banker. The girl was certainly sweet and pretty, but she had no dowry except numerous aristocratic prejudices and romantic illusions, and her father thought he was fortunate in getting rid of her on such favorable terms. M. Godefroy, who was the son of an avowed old miser of Andelys, had always remained a man of the people, and intensely vulgar. In spite of his improved circumstances, he had not improved. His entire lack of tact

and refinement was painful to his young wife, whose tenderest feelings he ruthlessly and thoughtlessly trampled upon. Things were looking unpromising, when, happily for her, Madame Godefroy died in giving birth to her firstborn. When



he spoke of his deceased wife, the banker waxed poetical, although, had she lived, they would have been divorced in six months. His son he loved dearly for several reasons—first, because the child was an only son; secondly, because he was a

scion of two such houses as Godefroy and Neufontaine; finally, because the man of money had naturally great respect for the heir to many millions. So the youngster had golden rattles and other similar toys, and was brought up like a young Dauphin. But his father, overwhelmed with business worries, could never



give the child more than fifteen minutes per day of his precious time—and, as on the day mentioned, it was always during “cheese”—and for the rest of the day the father abandoned the child to the care of the servants.

“Good-morning, Raoul.”

“Good-morning, papa.”

And the 'company director, having put his serviette away, sat young Raoul on his left knee, took the child's head between his big paws, and in stroking and kissing it actually forgot all his money matters and even his note of the afternoon, which was of great importance to him, as by it he could gain quite an important amount of patronage.

"Papa," said little Raoul suddenly, "will Father Christmas put anything in my shoe, to-night?"

The father answered with "Yes, if you are a good child." This was very striking from a man who was a pronounced freethinker, who always applauded every anti-clerical attack in the Chamber with a vigorous "Hear, hear." He made a mental note that he must buy some toys for his child that very afternoon.

Then he turned to the nursery-governess with:

"Are you quite satisfied with Raoul, Mademoiselle Bertha?"

Mademoiselle Bertha became as red as a peony at being addressed, as if the question were scarcely *comme il faut*, and replied by a little imbecile snigger, which seemed fully to satisfy M. Godefroy's curiosity about his son's conduct.

"It's fine to-day" said the financier, "but cold. If you take Raoul to Monceau park, mademoiselle, please be careful to wrap him up well."

Mademoiselle, by a second fit of idiotic smiling, having set at rest M. Godefroy's doubts and fears on that essential point, he kissed his child, left the room hastily, and in the hall was enveloped in his fur-coat by Charles, who also closed the carriage door. Then the faithful fellow went off to the café which he frequented, rue de Miromesnil, where he had promised to meet the coachman of the baroness who lived opposite, to play a game of billiards, thirty up,—and spot-barred, of course.

Thanks to the brown bay—for which a thousand francs over and above its value was paid by M. Godefroy as a result of a sumptuous snail-supper given to that gentleman's coachman by the horse-dealer—thanks to the expensive brown bay which certainly went well, the financier was able to get through his many engagements satisfactorily. He appeared punctually at the Bourse, sat at several committee tables, and at a quarter to five, by voting with the ministry, he helped to reassure France and Europe that the rumors of a ministerial crisis had been totally unfounded. He voted with the ministry because he had succeeded in obtaining the favors which he demanded as the price of his vote.

After he had thus nobly fulfilled his duty to himself and his country, M. Godefroy remembered what he had said to his child on the subject of Father Christmas, and gave his coachman the address of a dealer in toys. There he bought, and had put in his carriage, a fantastic rocking-horse, mounted on castors—a whip in each ear; a box of leaden soldiers—all as exactly alike as those grenadiers of the Russian regiment of the time of Paul I., who all had black hair and snub noses; and a score of other toys, all equally striking and costly. Then, as he returned home, softly reposing in his well-swung carriage, the rich banker, who, after all, was a father, began to think with pride of his little boy and to form plans for his future.

When the child grew up he should have an education worthy of a prince, and he would be one, too, for there was no longer any aristocracy except that of money, and his boy would have a capital of about 30,000,000 francs. If his father, a pettifogging provincial lawyer, who had formerly dined in the Latin quarter when in Paris, who had remarked every evening when putting on a white tie that he looked as fine as if he were going to a wedding—if he had been able to accumulate an enormous fortune, and to become thereby a power in the republic; if he had been able to obtain in marriage a young lady, one of whose ancestors had fallen at Marignan, what an important personage little Raoul might have become. M. Godefroy built all sorts of air-castles for his boy, forgetting that Christmas is the birthday of a very poor little child, son of a couple of vagrants, born in a stable, where the parents only found lodging through charity.

In the midst of the banker's dreams the coachman cried, "Door, please," and drove into the yard. As he went up the steps M. Godefroy was thinking that he had barely time to dress



for dinner ; but on entering the vestibule he found all the domestics crowded in front of him in a state of alarm and confusion. In a corner, crouching on a seat, was the German nursery-governess, crying. When she saw the banker she buried her face in



her hands and wept still more copiously than before. M. Godfrey felt that some misfortune had happened.

"What's the meaning of all this? What's amiss? What has happened?"

Charles, the *valet de chambre*, a sneaking rascal of the worst type, looked at his master with eyes full of pity and stammered—"Mr. Raoul——"

"My boy?"

"Lost, sir. The stupid German did it. Since four o'clock this afternoon he has not been seen."

The father staggered back like one who had been hit by a ball. The German threw herself at his feet screaming, "Mercy, mercy!" and the domestics all spoke at the same time.

"Bertha didn't go to *parc Monceau*. She lost the child over there on the fortifications. We have sought him all over, sir. We went to the office for you, sir, and then to the Chamber, but you had just left. Just imagine, the German had a rendezvous with her lover every day, beyond the ramparts, near the gate of Asnières. What a shame! It is a place full of low gypsies and strolling players. Perhaps the child has been stolen. Yes, sir, we informed the police at once. How could we imagine such a thing. A hypocrite, that German! She had a rendezvous, doubtless, with a countryman—a Prussian spy, sure enough!"

His son lost! M. Godefroy seemed to have a torrent of blood rushing through his head. He sprang at Mademoiselle, seized her by the arms and shook her furiously.

"Where did you lose him, you miserable girl? Tell me the truth before I shake you to pieces. Do you hear? Do you hear?"

But the unfortunate girl could only cry and beg for mercy.

The banker tried to be calm. No, it was impossible. Nobody would dare to steal *his* boy. Somebody would find him and bring him back. Of that there could be no doubt. He could scatter money about right and left, and could have the entire police force at his orders. And he would set to work at once, for not an instant should be lost.

"Charles, don't let the horses be taken out. You others, see that this girl doesn't escape. I'm going to the Prefecture."

And M. Godefroy, with his heart thumping against his sides as if it would break them, his hair wild with fright, darted into his carriage, which at once rolled off as fast as the horses could take it. What irony! The carriage was full of glittering playthings, which sparkled every time a gaslight shone on them. For the next day was the birthday of the divine Infant at whose cradle wise men and simple shepherds alike adored.

"My poor little Raoul. Poor darling! Where is my boy?" repeated the father as in his anguish he dug his nails into the cushions of the carriage. At that moment all his titles and decorations, his honors, his millions, were valueless to him. He had one single idea burning in his brain. "My poor child! Where is my child?"

At last he reached the Prefecture of Police. But no one was there—the office had been deserted for some time.

"I am M. Godefroy, deputy from L'Eure . . . My little boy is lost in Paris; a child of four years. I must see the Prefect."

He slipped a louis into the hand of the *concièrge*.

The good old soul, a veteran with a gray mustache, less for the sake of the money than out of compassion for the poor father, led him to the Prefect's private apartments. M. Godefroy was finally ushered into the room of the man in whom were centred all his hopes. He was in evening dress, and wore a monocle; his manner was frigid and rather pretentious. The distressed father, whose knees trembled through emotion, sank into an armchair, and, bursting into tears, told of the loss of his boy—told the story stammeringly and with many breaks, for his voice was choked by sobs.

The Prefect, who was also father of a family, was inwardly moved at the sight of his visitor's grief, but he repressed his emotion and assumed a cold and self-important air.

"You say, sir, that your child has been missing since four o'clock."

"Yes."

"Just when night was falling, confound it. He isn't at all precocious, speaks very little, doesn't know where he lives, and can't even pronounce his own name?"

"Unfortunately that is so."

"Not far from Asnières gate? A suspected quarter. But cheer up. We have a very intelligent *Commissaire de Police* there. I'll telephone to him."

The distressed father was left alone for five minutes. How his temples throbbed and his heart beat! Then, suddenly, the Prefect reappeared, smiling with satisfaction. "Found!"

Whereupon M. Godefroy rushed to the Prefect, whose hand he pressed till that functionary winced with the pain.

"I must acknowledge that we were exceedingly fortunate. The little chap is blonde, isn't he? Rather pale? In blue velvet? Black felt hat, with a white feather in it?"

"Yes, yes; that's he. That's my little Raoul."

"Well, he's at the house of a poor fellow down in that quarter who had just been at the police office to make his declaration to the Commissaire. Here's his address, which I took down: '*Pierron, rue des Cailloux, Levallois-Perret.*' With good horses

you may reach your boy in less than an hour. Certainly, you won't find him in an aristocratic quarter ; his surroundings won't be of the highest. The man who found him is only a small dealer in vegetables."

But that was of no importance to M. Godefroy, who, having expressed his gratitude to the Prefect, leaped down the stairs four at a time, and sprang into his carriage. At that moment he realized how devotedly he loved his child. As he drove away he no longer thought of little Raoul's princely education and magnificent inheritance. He was decided never again to hand over the child entirely to the hands of servants, and he also made up his mind to devote less time to monetary matters and the glory of France and attend more to his own. The thought also occurred to him that France wouldn't be likely to suffer from the neglect. He had hitherto been ashamed to recognize the existence of an old-maid sister of his father, but he decided to send for her to his house. She would certainly shock his lackeys by her primitive manners and ideas. But what of that ? She would take care of his boy, which to him was of much more importance than the good opinion of his servants. The financier, who was always in a hurry, never felt so eager to arrive punctually at a committee meeting as he was to reach the lost little one. For the first time in his life he was longing through pure affection to take the child in his arms.

The carriage rolled rapidly along in the clear, crisp night air down boulevard Malesherbes ; and, having crossed the ramparts and passed the large houses, plunged into the quiet solitude of suburban streets. When the carriage stopped M. Godefroy saw a wretched hovel, on which was the number he was seeking ; it was the house where Pierron lived. The door of the house opened immediately, and a big, rough-looking fellow with red mustache appeared. One of his sleeves was empty. Seeing the gentleman in the carriage, Pierron said cheerily : "So you are the little one's father. Don't be afraid. The little darling is quite safe," and, stepping aside in order to allow M. Godefroy to pass, he placed his finger on his lips with : "Hush ! The little one is asleep !"

Yes, it was a real hovel. By the dim light of a little oil lamp M. Godefroy could just distinguish a dresser from which a drawer was missing, some broken chairs, a round table on which stood a beer-mug which was half empty, three glasses, some cold meat on a plate, and on the bare plaster of the wall two gaudy pictures

—a bird's-eye view of the Exposition of 1889, with the Eiffel tower in bright blue, and the portrait of General Boulanger when a handsome young lieutenant. This last evidence of weakness of the tenant of the house may well be excused, since it was shared by nearly everybody in France. The man took the lamp and went on tip-toe to the corner of the room where, on a clean bed, two little fellows were fast asleep. In the little one, around whom the other had thrown a protecting arm, M. Godefroy recognized his son.



"The youngsters were tired to death, and so sleepy," said Pierron, trying to soften his rough voice. "I had no idea when you would come, so gave them some supper and put them to bed, and then I went to make a declaration at the police office. Zidore generally sleeps up in the garret, but I thought they would

be better here, and that I should be better able to watch them."

M. Godefroy, however, scarcely heard the explanation. Strangely moved, he looked at the two sleeping infants on an iron bedstead and covered with an old blanket which had once been used either in barracks or hospital. Little Raoul, who was still in his velvet suit, looked so frail and delicate compared with his companion, that the banker almost envied the latter his brown complexion.

"Is he your boy?" he asked Pierron.

"No," answered he. "I am a bachelor, and don't suppose I shall ever marry, because of my accident. You see, a

dray passed over my arm—that was all. Two years ago a neighbor of mine died, when that child was only five years old. The poor mother really died of starvation. She wove wreaths for



the cemeteries, but could make nothing worth mentioning at that trade—not enough to live. However, she worked for the child for five years, and then the neighbors had to buy wreaths for her. So I took care of the youngster. Oh, it was nothing much, and I was soon repaid. He is seven years old, and is a sharp little fellow, so he helps me a great deal. On Sundays and Thursdays, and the other days after school, he helps me push my handcart. Zidore is a smart little chap. It was he who found your boy."

"What!" exclaimed M. Godefroy—"that child!"

"Oh, he's quite a little man, I assure you. When he left school he found your child, who was walking on ahead, crying like a fountain. He spoke to him and comforted him, like an old grandfather. The difficulty is, that one can't easily understand what your little one says—English words are mixed up with German and French. So we couldn't get much out of him, nor could we learn his address. Zidore brought him to me—I wasn't far away; and then all the



old women in the place came round chattering and croaking like so many frogs, and all full of advice.

"Take him to the police," said some.

But Zidore protested. "That would scare him," said he, for, like all Parisians, he has no particular liking for the police—"and besides, your little one didn't wish to leave him. So I came back here with the children as soon as I could. They had supper, and then off to bed. Don't they look sweet?"



When he was in his carriage, M. Godefroy had decided to reward the finder of his child handsomely—to give him a handful of that gold so easily gained. Since entering the house he had seen a side of human nature

with which he was formerly unacquainted—the brave charity of the poor in their misery. The courage of the poor girl who had worked herself to death weaving wreaths to keep her child; the generosity of the poor cripple in adopting the orphan, and above all, the intelligent goodness of the little street Arab in protecting the child who was still smaller than himself—all this touched M. Godefroy deeply and set him reflecting. For the thought had occurred to him that there were other cripples who needed to be looked after as well as Pierron, and other orphans as well as Zidore. He also debated whether it would not be better to employ his time looking after them, and whether money might not be put to a better use than merely gaining money. Such was his reverie as he stood looking at the two sleeping children. Finally, he turned round to study the features of the greengrocer, and was charmed by the loyal expression in the face of the man, and his clear, truthful eyes.

“My friend,” said M. Godefroy, “you and your adopted son have rendered me an immense service. I shall soon prove to you that I am not ungrateful. But, for to-day—I see that you are not in comfortable circumstances, and I should like to leave a small proof of my thankfulness.”

But the hand of the cripple arrested that of the banker, which was diving into his coat-pocket where he kept bank notes.

“No, sir; no! Anybody else would have done just as we have done. I will not accept any recompense; but pray don’t take offence. Certainly, I am not rolling in wealth, but please excuse my pride—that of an old soldier; I have the Tonquin medal—and I don’t wish to eat food which I haven’t earned.”

“As you like,” said the financier; “but an old soldier like you is capable of something better. You are too good to push a handcart. I will make some arrangement for you, never fear.”

The cripple responded by a quiet smile, and said coldly: “Well, sir, if you really wish to do something for me——”

“You’ll let me care for Zidore, won’t you?” cried M. Godefroy, eagerly.

“That I will, with the greatest of pleasure,” responded Pierron, joyfully. “I have often thought about the child’s future. He is a sharp little fellow. His teachers are delighted with him.”

Then Pierron suddenly stopped, and an expression came over his face which M. Godefroy at once interpreted as one of distrust.

The thought evidently was: "Oh, when he has once left us he'll forget us entirely."

"You can safely pick the child up in your arms and take him to the carriage. He'll be better at home than here, of course. Oh, you needn't be afraid of disturbing him. He is fast asleep, and you can just pick him up. He must have his shoes on first, though."

Following Pierron's glance M. Godefroy perceived on the hearth, where a scanty coke fire was dying out, two pairs of children's shoes—the elegant ones of Raoul, and the rough ones of Zidore. Each pair contained a little toy and a package of bonbons.



"Don't think about that," said Pierron in an abashed tone. "Zidore put the shoes there. You know children still believe in Christmas and the child Jesus, whatever scholars may say about fables; so, as I came back from the *commissaire*, as I didn't know whether your boy would have to stay here to-night, I got those things for them both."

At which the eyes of M. Godefroy, the freethinker, the hardened capitalist, and *blasé* man of the world, filled with tears.

He rushed out of the house, but returned in a minute with his arms full of the superb mechanical horse, the box of leaden soldiers, and the rest of the costly playthings bought by him in the afternoon, and which had not even been taken out of the carriage.

"My friend, my dear friend," said he to the greengrocer, "see, these are the presents which Christmas has brought to my little Raoul. I want him to find them here, when he awakens, and to share them with Zidore, who will henceforth be his playmate and friend. You'll trust me now, won't you? I'll take care both of Zidore and of you, and then I shall ever remain in your debt, for not only have you found my boy, but you have also reminded me, who am rich and lived only for myself, that there are other poor who need to be looked after. I swear by these two sleeping children, I won't forget them any longer."

Such is the miracle which happened on the 24th of December of last year, ladies and gentlemen, at Paris, in the full flow of modern egotism. It doesn't sound likely—that I own; and I am compelled to attribute this miraculous event to the influence of the Divine child who came down to earth nearly nineteen centuries ago to command men to love one another.



THE moment Petersen came into the coffee-room of the Great Eastern Hotel at Calcutta, about breakfast time, one morning last year, I anticipated trouble. I was engaged in taking breakfast with Hewitt, who promptly growled:

"There's that beast!"—with his mouth full of toast.

The position certainly was a trifle strained. We three had been close friends in a hill station, where we had been forced to share most things. Petersen and Hewitt had foolishly attempted to share Adelina Marriott; and thereafter Petersen had exchanged into the Gurkhas, after the manner of jilted youths.

It was useless to feign that this was not Petersen. We knew his solemn long nose as well as he knew it himself. It was equally futile for the newcomer to pretend that the coffee-room was vacant. I was aware—painfully aware—of the fact that both were hot-tempered men, and that they had not spoken to each other for a year and more.

I had had no quarrel with Petersen, and we had not met for eighteen months. I rose and shook hands. Other men's quarrels are not my business, unless they be kings, and their subjects get hurt. The butler bustled forward with his spotless turban and obsequious smile.

"A chair at this table—issar! Yes, issar!"

Which was precisely what Petersen and Hewitt did not want. Petersen shuffled like a school-boy, and Hewitt slowly rose. Nodding was out of the question; a weather remark

* A selection from "The National Observer."

would not do. The greatest atmospheric phenomenon on record was not large enough to break this awkward pause.

"How do you do?" inquired Petersen, stiffly.

"All right, old chap," replied Hewitt, who was a simple youth, and not at all up to dramatic situations. "Bobbing along," he added, with a futile smile, which was no doubt intended to ease the tension.

Petersen sat down and unfolded a dinner-napkin deliberately—not without a longing glance at a small table set for two.

"How have you been getting on, Doctor?" he said to me. "I saw you were in the Peshawur District affair."

"Yes; always in the wars."

"And not married yet?" with a sudden laugh, as at the recollection of a standing "mess" joke.

"No; we are all old bachelors still."

Hewitt and Petersen looked at each other guiltily. Petersen was evidently surprised. We all thought of Adelina Marriott. I had never known much of her. She soon gave me up when she found that I did not mean business. I recalled her pretty shallow face—her pretty shallow ways; and reflected that after all these two could afford to make it up.

"Yes," said Hewitt, with a twinkle in his eyes, "we're all old bachelors still!"

His pleasant boyish face twitched with a suppressed smile. He had evidently been but slightly hit. He was, I think, one of those men who never seem to be very hard hit by anything they encounter.

Petersen glanced at him with a softer look in his solemn eyes.

"She refused me, old chap," Hewitt said frankly.

Petersen looked grim and reached out his hand for the pepper-pot.

"She said," went on young Hewitt, who had little sentiment in him, "that she liked me very much—but that I had not won her heart. She said she could not bestow her hand where she had not given her heart."

Petersen dropped his fork with a clatter.

"Did she say that to you?"

"Yes," answered Hewitt, guilelessly. "It was before I had come into my—dibs."

"She said the same to me," said Petersen, with a queer grimness about his long nose. "The very same words—'I cannot bestow my hand where I have not given my heart.'"

"And you never even had prospects," added the simple Hewitt, looking over my head toward the door. "Oh, lord!" he added. "Here's old Poldenner—looking richer and yellower than ever. He's got a new set of teeth, which is an improvement—the same old grin, though! How do, Mr. Poldenner!"

Petersen and I turned to greet a man we both disliked intensely—an indigo planter of the old school, a cad, a braggart—a bore, who had made himself, with all the incompleteness of a home-manufactured article.

"You're a great swell, Mr. Poldenner," said Hewitt, presently, gazing at the old fop with a single eyeglass, which he wore because his regiment was a shortsighted regiment.

"Yes, my boy," with a hideous assumption of youthfulness. "Just got married."

"Lord! Was it a love match?" inquired Hewitt, with a twinkle.

"Yes, it was," replied Poldenner, emphatically, in his thick voice. "That is just what it was. My wife says that she never could bestow her hand where she had not given her heart."

Petersen's long nose swung round like the needle of a compass.

There was a little silence, and then Hewitt solemnly held out his hand to Petersen, who took it. A minute later we all turned and bowed gravely to Adelina Poldenner in her going-away dress.



THE PURLOINED LETTER

BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

Famous Story Series



AT Paris, just after dark one gusty evening in the autumn of 18—, I was enjoying the twofold luxury of meditation and a meerschaum, in company with my friend C. Auguste Dupin, in his little back library, or book-closet, *au troisième*, No. 33 Rue Dunot, Faubourg St. Germain. For one hour at least we had maintained a profound silence, while each, to any casual observer, might have seemed intently and exclusively occupied with the curling eddies of smoke that oppressed the atmosphere of the chamber. For myself, however, I was mentally discussing certain topics which had formed matter for conversation between us at an earlier period of the evening; I mean the affair of the Rue Morgue, and the mystery attending the murder of Marie Roget. I looked upon it, therefore, as something of a coincidence, when the door of our apartment was thrown open and admitted our old acquaintance Monsieur G——, the Prefect of the Parisian police.

We gave him a hearty welcome; for there was nearly half as much of the entertaining as of the contemptible about the man, and we had not seen him for several years. We had been sitting in the dark, and Dupin now arose for the purpose of lighting a lamp, but sat down again, without doing so, upon G——'s saying that he had called to consult us, or rather to ask the opinion of my friend, about some official business which had occasioned a great deal of trouble.

"If it is any point requiring reflection," observed Dupin, as he forebore to enkindle the wick, "we shall examine it to better purpose in the dark."

"That is another of your odd notions," said the Prefect, who had a fashion of calling everything "odd" that was beyond his

comprehension, and thus lived amid an absolute legion of "oddities."

"Very true," said Dupin, as he supplied his visitor with a pipe, and rolled toward him a comfortable chair.

"And what is the difficulty now?" I asked. "Nothing more in the assassination way I hope?"

"Oh no; nothing of that nature. The fact is, the business is very simple indeed, and I make no doubt that we can manage it sufficiently well ourselves; but then I thought Dupin would like to hear the details of it, because it is so excessively odd."

"Simple and odd," said Dupin.

"Why yes; and not exactly that, either. The fact is, we have all been a good deal puzzled because the affair is so simple, and yet baffles us altogether."

"Perhaps it is the very simplicity of the thing which puts you at fault," said my friend.

"What nonsense you do talk!" replied the Prefect, laughing heartily.

"Perhaps the mystery is a little too plain," said Dupin.

"Oh, good heavens! who ever heard of such an idea?"

"A little too self-evident."

"Ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha!—ho! ho! ho!" roared our visitor, profoundly amused. "Oh, Dupin, you will be the death of me yet!"

"And what, after all, is the matter on hand?" I asked.

"Why, I will tell you," replied the Prefect, as he gave a long, steady, and contemplative puff, and settled himself in his chair.

"I will tell you in a few words; but before I begin, let me caution you that this is an affair demanding the greatest secrecy, and that I should most probably lose the position I now hold were it known that I confided it to any one."

"Proceed," said I.

"Or not," said Dupin.

"Well, then; I have received personal information, from a very high quarter, that a certain document of the last importance has been purloined from the royal apartments. The individual who purloined it is known; this beyond a doubt; he was seen to take it. It is known, also, that it still remains in his possession."

"How is this known?" asked Dupin.

"It is clearly inferred," replied the Prefect, "from the nature of the document, and from the non-appearance of certain results

which would at once arise from its passing out of the robber's possession;—that is to say, from his employing it as he must design in the end to employ it.”

“Be a little more explicit,” said I.

“Well, I may venture so far as to say that the paper gives its holder a certain power in a quarter where such power is immensely valuable.” The Prefect was fond of the cant of diplomacy.

“Still I do not quite understand,” said Dupin.

“No? Well; the disclosure of the document to a third person, who shall be nameless, would bring in question the honor of a personage of most exalted station; and this fact gives the holder of the document an ascendancy over the illustrious personage whose honor and peace are so jeopardized.”

“But this ascendancy,” I interposed, “would depend upon the robber's knowledge of the loser's knowledge of the robber. Who would dare——”

“The thief,” said G——, “is the Minister D——, who dares all things, those unbecoming as well as those becoming a man. The method of the theft was not less ingenious than bold. The document in question—a letter, to be frank—had been received by the personage robbed while alone in the royal boudoir. During its perusal she was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of the other exalted personage, from whom especially it was her wish to conceal it. After a hurried and vain endeavor to thrust it in a drawer, she was forced to place it, open as it was, upon a table. The address, however, was uppermost, and, the contents thus unexposed, the letter escaped notice. At this juncture enters the Minister D——. His lynx eye immediately perceives the paper, recognizes the handwriting of the address, observes the confusion of the personage addressed, and fathoms her secret. After some business transactions, hurried through in his ordinary manner, he produces a letter somewhat similar to the one in question, opens it, pretends to read it, and then places it in close juxtaposition to the other. Again he converses for some fifteen minutes upon the public affairs. At length, in taking leave, he takes also from the table the letter to which he had no claim. Its rightful owner saw, but of course dared not call attention to the act in the presence of the third personage, who stood at her elbow. The minister decamped, leaving his own letter—one of no importance—upon the table.”

“Here, then,” said Dupin to me, “you have precisely what

you demand to make the ascendancy complete—the robber's knowledge of the loser's knowledge of the robber."

"Yes," replied the Prefect; "and the power thus attained has, for some months past, been wielded, for political purposes, to a very dangerous extent. The personage robbed is more thoroughly convinced, every day, of the necessity of reclaiming her letter. But this, of course, cannot be done openly. In fine, driven to despair, she has committed the matter to me."

"Than whom," said Dupin, amid a perfect whirlwind of smoke, "no more sagacious agent could, I suppose, be desired or even imagined."

"You flatter me," replied the Prefect; "but it is possible that some such opinion may have been entertained."

"It is clear," said I, "as you observe, that the letter is still in possession of the minister; since it is this possession, and not any employment of the letter, which bestows the power. With the employment the power departs."

"True," said G——; "and upon this conviction I proceeded. My first care was to make thorough search of the minister's hotel; and here my chief embarrassment lay in the necessity of searching without his knowledge. Beyond all things, I have been warned of the danger which would result from giving him reason to suspect our design."

"But," said I, "you are quite *au fait* in these investigations. The Parisian police have done this thing often before."

"O yes; and for this reason I did not despair. The habits of the minister gave me, too, a great advantage. He is frequently absent from home all night. His servants are by no means numerous. They sleep at a distance from their master's apartment, and, being chiefly Neapolitans, are readily made drunk. I have the keys, as you know, with which I can open any chamber or cabinet in Paris. For three months a night has not passed, during the greater part of which I have not been engaged, personally, in racking the D—— Hotel. My honor is interested, and, to mention a great secret, the reward is enormous. So I did not abandon the search until I had become fully satisfied that the thief is a more astute man than myself. I fancy that I have investigated every nook and corner of the premises in which it is possible that the paper can be concealed."

"But is it not possible," I suggested, "that although the letter may be in possession of the minister, as it unquestionably is, he may have concealed it elsewhere than upon his own premises?"

"This is barely possible," said Dupin. "The present peculiar condition of affairs at court, and especially of those intrigues in which D—— is known to be involved, would render the instant availability of the document—its susceptibility of being procured at a moment's notice—a point of nearly equal importance with its possession."

"Its susceptibility of being produced?" said I.

"That is to say, of being destroyed," said Dupin.

"True," I observed; "the paper is clearly, then, upon the premises. As for its being upon the person of the minister, we may consider that as out of the question."

"Entirely," said the Prefect. "He has been twice waylaid, as if by footpads, and his person rigorously searched under my own inspection."

"You might have spared yourself this trouble," said Dupin. "D——, I presume, is not altogether a fool, and, if not, must have anticipated these waylayings, as a matter of course."

"Not altogether a fool," said G——; "but then he's a poet, which I take to be only one remove from a fool."

"True," said Dupin, after a long and thoughtful whiff from his meerschaum, "although I have been guilty of certain doggerel myself."

"Suppose you detail," said I, "the particulars of your search."

"Why, the fact is, we took our time, and we searched everywhere. I have had long experience in these affairs. I took the entire building, room by room; devoting the nights of a whole week to each. We examined, first, the furniture of each apartment. We opened every possible drawer; and I presume you know that, to a properly trained police agent, such a thing as a secret drawer is impossible. Any man is a dolt who permits a 'secret' drawer to escape him in a search of this kind. The thing is so plain. There is a certain amount of bulk—of space—to be accounted for in every cabinet. Then we have accurate rules. The fiftieth part of a line could not escape us. After the cabinets we took the chairs. The cushions we probed with the fine long needles you have seen me employ. From the tables we removed the tops."

"Why so?"

"Sometimes the top of a table, or other similarly arranged piece of furniture, is removed by the person wishing to conceal an article; then the leg is excavated, the article deposited

within the cavity, and the top replaced. The bottoms and tops of bedposts are employed in the same way."

"But could not the cavity be detected by sounding?" I asked.

"By no means, if, when the article is deposited, a sufficient wadding of cotton be placed around it. Besides, in our case we were obliged to proceed without noise."

"But you could not have removed—you could not have taken to pieces all articles of furniture in which it would have been possible to make a deposit in the manner you mention. A letter may be compressed into a thin spiral roll, not differing much in shape or bulk from a large knitting-needle, and in this form it might be inserted into the rung of a chair, for example. You did not take to pieces all the chairs?"

"Certainly not; but we did better—we examined the rungs of every chair in the hotel, and, indeed, the jointings of every description of furniture, by the aid of a most powerful microscope. Had there been any traces of recent disturbance we should not have failed to detect it instantly. A single grain of gimlet-dust, for example, would have been as obvious as an apple. Any disorder in the gluing—any unusual gaping in the joints—would have sufficed to insure detection.

"I presume you looked to the mirrors, between the boards and the plates, and you probed the beds and the bedclothes, as well as the curtains and carpets."

"That, of course; and when we had absolutely completed every article of furniture in this way, then we examined the house itself. We divided its entire surface into compartments, which we numbered, so that none might be missed; then we scrutinized each individual square inch throughout the premises, including the two houses immediately adjoining, with the microscope, as before."

"The two houses adjoining!" I exclaimed; "you must have had a great deal of trouble."

"We had; but the reward offered is prodigious."

"You include the grounds about the houses?"

"All the grounds are paved with brick. They gave us comparatively little trouble. We examined the moss between the bricks, and found it undisturbed."

"You looked among D——'s papers, of course, and into the books of the library?"

"Certainly; we opened every book, but we turned over every

leaf in each volume, not contenting ourselves with a mere shake, according to the fashion of some of our police officers. We also measured the thickness of every book-cover with the most accurate admeasurement, and applied to each the most jealous scrutiny of the microscope. Had any of the bindings been recently meddled with, it would have been utterly impossible that the fact should have escaped observation. Some five or six volumes, just from the hands of the binder, we carefully probed, longitudinally, with the needles."

"You explored the floors beneath the carpets?"

"Beyond doubt. We removed every carpet and examined the boards with the microscope."

"And the paper on the walls?"

"Yes."

"You looked into the cellars?"

"We did."

"Then," I said, "you have been making a miscalculation, and the letter is not upon the premises, as you suppose."

"I fear you are right, there," said the Prefect. "And now, Dupin, what would you advise me to do?"

"To make a thorough re-search of the premises."

"That is absolutely needless," replied G——. "I am not more sure that I breathe than I am that the letter is not at the hotel."

"I have no better advice to give you," said Dupin. "You have, of course, an accurate description of the letter?"

"Oh, yes." And here the Prefect, producing a memorandum-book, proceeded to read aloud a minute account of the internal, and especially of the external appearance of the missing document. Soon after finishing the perusal of this description, he took his departure, more entirely depressed in spirits than I had ever known the good gentleman before.

In about a month afterward he paid us another visit, and found us occupied very nearly as before. He took a pipe and a chair and entered into some ordinary conversation. At length I said:

"Well, but G——, what of the purloined letter? I presume you have at last made up your mind that there is no such thing as overreaching the Minister?"

"Confound him, say I—yes; I made the re-examination, however, as Dupin suggested—but it was all labor lost, as I knew it would be."

"How much was the reward offered, did you say?" asked Dupin.

"Why, a very great deal—a very liberal reward—I don't like to say how much precisely; but one thing I will say, that I wouldn't mind giving my individual check for fifty thousand francs to any one who could obtain me that letter. The fact is, it is becoming of more and more importance every day; and the reward has been lately doubled. If it were trebled, however, I could do no more than I have done."

"Why, yes," said Dupin, drawlingly, between the whiffs of his meerschaum, "I really—think, G——, you have not exerted yourself—to the utmost in this matter. You might—do a little more, I think, eh?"

"How?—in what way?"

"Why (puff, puff) you might (puff, puff) employ counsel in the matter, eh (puff, puff, puff)? Do you remember the story they tell of Abernethy?"

"No; hang Abernethy!"

"To be sure! hang him and welcome. But, once upon a time, a certain rich miser conceived the design of spunging upon this Abernethy for a medical opinion. Getting up, for this purpose, an ordinary conversation in a private company, he insinuated his case to the physician, as that of an imaginary individual.

"'We will suppose,' said the miser, 'that his symptoms are such and such; now, doctor, what would you have directed him to take?'"

"'Take!' said Abernethy, 'why, take advice, to be sure.'"

"But," said the Prefect, a little discomposed, "I am perfectly willing to take advice, and to pay for it. I would really give fifty thousand francs to any one who would aid me in the matter."

"In that case," replied Dupin, opening a drawer, and producing a check-book, "you may as well fill me up a check for the amount mentioned. When you have signed it, I will hand you the letter."

I was astounded. The Prefect appeared absolutely thunder-stricken. For some minutes he remained speechless and motionless, looking incredulously at my friend with open mouth, and eyes that seemed starting from their sockets; then, apparently recovering himself in some measure, he seized a pen and after several pauses and vacant stares, finally filled up and signed a

check for fifty thousand francs, and handed it across the table to Dupin. The latter examined it carefully and deposited it in his pocket-book; then, unlocking an *escritoire*, took thence a letter and gave it to the Prefect. This functionary grasped it in a perfect agony of joy, opened it with a trembling hand, cast a rapid glance at its contents, and then, scrambling and struggling to the door, rushed at length unceremoniously from the room and from the house, without having uttered a syllable since Dupin had requested him to fill up the check.

When he had gone, my friend entered into some explanations.

"The Parisian police," he said, "are exceedingly able in their way. They are persevering, ingenious, cunning, and thoroughly versed in the knowledge which their duties seem chiefly to demand. Thus, when G—— detailed to us his mode of searching the premises of the Hotel D——, I felt entire confidence in his having made a satisfactory investigation—so far as his labors extended."

"So far as his labors extended?" said I.

"Yes," said Dupin. "The measures adopted were not only the best of their kind, but carried out to absolute perfection. Had the letter been deposited within the range of their search these fellows would, beyond a question, have found it."

I merely laughed—but he seemed quite serious in all that he said.

"The measures, then," he continued, "were good in their kind, and well executed; the defect lay in their being inapplicable to the case and to the man. A certain set of highly ingenious resources are, with the Prefect, a sort of Procrustean bed, to which he forcibly adapts his designs. But he perpetually errs, by being too deep or too shallow for the matter in hand; and many a school-boy is a better reasoner than he. I knew one about eight years of age, whose success at guessing in the game of 'even and odd' attracted universal admiration.

"This game is simple and is played with marbles. One player holds in his hand a number of these toys, and demands of another whether that number is even or odd. If the guess is right, the guesser wins one; if wrong, he loses one. The boy to whom I allude won all the marbles of the school. Of course he had some principle of guessing; and this lay in mere observation and admeasurement of the astuteness of his opponents. For example, an arrant simpleton is his opponent, and, holding up his closed hand asks, 'Are they even or odd?' Our school-boy re-

plies, 'Odd,' and loses; but upon the second trial he wins, for he then says to himself, 'This simpleton had them even upon the first trial, and his amount of cunning is just sufficient to make him have them odd upon the second; I will therefore guess odd;—he guesses odd, and wins. Now, with a simpleton a degree above the first, he would have reasoned thus: 'This fellow finds that in the first instance I guessed odd, and in the second he will propose to himself, upon the first impulse, a simple variation, and finally he will decide upon putting it even as before. I will therefore guess even; he guesses even and wins. Now this mode of reasoning in the school-boy, whom his fellows term 'lucky,' what, in its last analysis, is it?'

"It is merely," I said, "an identification of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent."

"It is," said Dupin; "and, upon inquiring of the boy by what means he effected the thorough identification in which his success consisted, I received the answer as follows: 'When I wish to find out how wise, or how stupid, or how good, or how wicked is any one, or what are his thoughts at the moment, I fashion the expression of my face as accurately as possible in accordance with the expression of his, and then wait to see what thoughts or sentiments arise in my mind or heart, as if to match or correspond with the expression.' This response of the school-boy lies at the bottom of all the spurious profundity which has been attributed to Rochefoucauld, to La Bougive, to Machiavelli, and to Campanella."

"And the identification," I said, "of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent depends, if I understand you aright, upon the accuracy with which the opponent's intellect is admeasured."

"For its practical value it depends upon this," replied Dupin; "and the Prefect and his cohort fail so frequently, first, by default of this identification, and, secondly, by ill admeasurement, or rather through non-admeasurement, of the intellect with which they are engaged. They consider only their own ideas of ingenuity; and, searching for anything hidden, advert only to the modes in which they would have hidden it. They are right in this much—that their own ingenuity is a faithful representative of that of the mass; but when the cunning of the individual felon is diverse in character from their own, the felon foils them, of course. This always happens when it is above their own, and very usually when it is below. They have no variation of prin-

ciple in their investigations ; at best, when urged by some unusual emergency—by some extraordinary reward—they extend or exaggerate their old modes of practice, without touching their principles. What, for example, in this case of D——, has been done to vary the principle of action ? What is all this boring, and probing, and sounding, and scrutinizing with the microscope, and dividing the surface of a building into registered square inches—what is it all but an exaggeration of the application of the one principle or set of principles of search, which are based upon the one set of notions regarding human ingenuity, to which the Prefect, in the long routine of his duty, has been accustomed ? Do you not see he has taken it for granted that all men proceed to conceal a letter—not exactly in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair-leg—but, at least, in some out-of-the-way hole or corner suggested by the same tenor of thought which would urge a man to secrete a letter in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair-leg ? And do you not see also, that such *recherchés* nooks for concealment are adapted only for ordinary occasions, and would be adopted only by ordinary intellects ; for, in all cases of concealment, a disposal of the article concealed—a disposal of it in this *recherché* manner, is, in the very first instance, presumable and presumed ; and thus its discovery depends, not at all upon the acumen, but altogether upon the mere care, patience, and determination of the seekers ; and where the case is of importance—or, what amounts to the same thing in policial eyes, when the reward is of magnitude—the qualities in question have never been known to fail. You will now understand what I meant in suggesting that, had the purloined letter been hidden anywhere within the limits of the Prefect's examination—in other words, had the principle of its concealment been comprehended within the principles of the Prefect—its discovery would have been a matter altogether beyond question. This functionary, however, has been thoroughly mystified ; and the remote source of his defeat lies in the supposition that the Minister is a fool, because he has acquired renown as a poet. All fools are poets ; this the Prefect feels ; and he is merely guilty of a *non distributio medii* in thence inferring that all poets are fools."

"But is this really the poet ?" I asked. "There are two brothers, I know ; and both have attained reputation in letters. The Minister, I believe, has written learnedly on the differential calculus. He is a mathematician, and no poet."

"You are mistaken ; I know him well ; he is both. As poet

and mathematician he would reason well; as mere mathematician he could not have reasoned at all, and thus would have been at the mercy of the Prefect."

"You surprise me," I said, "by these opinions, which have been contradicted by the voice of the world. You do not mean to set at naught the well-digested idea of centuries. The mathematical reason has long been regarded as *the* reason par excellence."

"*'Il y a à parier,'*" replied Dupin, quoting from Chamfort, "*'que toute idée publique, toute convention reçue, est une sottise, car elle a convenu au plus grand nombre.'*" The Mathematicians, I grant you, have done their best to promulgate the popular error to which you allude, and which is none the less an error for its promulgation as truth. With an art worthy a better cause, for example, they have insinuated the term 'analysis' into application to algebra. The French are the originators of this particular deception; but if a term is of any importance—if words derive any value from applicability—then 'analysis' conveys, in 'algebra,' about as much as, in Latin, '*ambitus*' implies 'ambition,' '*religio*,' 'religion,' or '*homines honesti*,' 'a set of honorable men.'"

"You have a quarrel on hand, I see," said I, "with some of the algebraists of Paris; but proceed."

"I dispute the availability, and thus the value, of that reason which is cultivated in any especial form other than the abstractly logical. I dispute, in particular, the reason educed by mathematical study. The mathematics are the science of form and quantity; mathematical reasoning is merely logic applied to observation upon form and quantity. The great error lies in supposing that even the truths of what is called *pure* algebra are abstract or general truths. And this error is so egregious that I am confounded at the universality with which it has been received. Mathematical axioms are *not* axioms of general truth. What is true of *relation*—of form and quantity—is often grossly false in regard to morals, for example. In this latter science it is very usually untrue that the aggregated parts are equal to the whole. In chemistry also the axiom fails. In the consideration of motive it fails; for two motives, each of a given value, have not, necessarily, a value, when united, equal to the sum of their values apart. There are numerous other mathematical truths which are only truths within the limits of *relation*. But the mathematician argues, from his *finite truths*, through habit,

as if they were of an absolute applicability—as the world indeed imagines them to be. Bryant, in his very learned ‘Mythology,’ mentions an analogous source of error, when he says that ‘although the Pagan fables are not believed, yet we forget ourselves continually, and make inferences from them as existing realities.’ With the algebraists, however, who are Pagans themselves, the ‘Pagan fables’ *are* believed, and the inferences are made, not so much through lapse of memory, as through an unaccountable addling of the brains. In short, I never yet encountered the mere mathematician who could be trusted out of equal roots, or one who did not clandestinely hold it as a point of his faith that $x^2 + px$ was absolutely and unconditionally equal to q . Say to one of these gentlemen, by way of experiment, if you please, that you believe occasions may occur where $x^2 + px$ is *not* always equal to q , and, having made him understand what you mean, get out of his reach as speedily as convenient, for, beyond doubt, he will endeavor to knock you down.

“I mean to say,” continued Dupin, while I merely laughed at his last observation, “that if the Minister had been no more than a mathematician, the Prefect would have been under no necessity of giving me this check. I knew him, however, as both mathematician and poet, and my measures were adapted to his capacity, with reference to the circumstances by which he was surrounded. I knew him as a courtier, too, and as a bold intrigant. Such a man, I considered, could not fail to be aware of the ordinary policial modes of action. He could not have failed to anticipate—and events have proved that he did not fail to anticipate—the waylayings to which he was subjected. He must have foreseen, I reflected, the secret investigations of his premises. His frequent absences from home at night, which were hailed by the Prefect as certain aids to his success, I regarded only as ruses, to afford opportunity for thorough search to the police, and thus the sooner to impress them with the conviction to which G——, in fact, did finally arrive—the conviction that the letter was not upon the premises. I felt, also, that the whole train of thought, which I was at some pains in detailing to you just now, concerning the invariable principles of policial action in searches for articles concealed—I felt that this whole train of thought would necessarily pass through the mind of the Minister. It would imperatively lead him to despise all the ordinary nooks of concealment. He could not, I reflected, be so weak as not to see that the most intricate and remote re-

cess of the hotel would be as open as his commonest closets to the eyes, to the probes, to the gimlets, and to the microscopes of the Prefect. I saw, in fine, that he would be driven, as a matter of course, to *simplicity*, if not deliberately induced to it as a matter of choice. You will remember, perhaps, how desperately the Prefect laughed when I suggested, upon our first interview, that it was just possible this mystery troubled him so much on account of its being so *very* self-evident."

"Yes," said I, "I remember 'his merriment well. I really thought he would have fallen into convulsions."

"The material world," continued Dupin, "abounds with very strict analogies to the immaterial; and thus some color of truth has been given to the rhetorical dogma, that metaphor, or simile, may be made to strengthen an argument, as well as to embellish a description. The principle of the *vis inertia*, for example, seems to be identical in physics and metaphysics. It is not more true in the former, that a large body is with more difficulty set in motion than a smaller one, and that its subsequent momentum is commensurate with this difficulty, than it is in the latter, that intellects of the vaster capacity, while more forcible, more constant, and more eventful in their movements than those of inferior grade, are yet the less readily moved, and more embarrassed and full of hesitation in the first few steps of their progress. Again, have you ever noticed which of the street signs over the shop-doors are the most attractive of attention?"

"I have never given the matter a thought," I said.

"There is a game of puzzles," he resumed, "which is played upon a map. One party playing requires another to find a given word—the name of town, river, State, or empire—any word, in short, upon the motley and perplexed surface of the chart. A novice in the game generally seeks to embarrass his opponents by giving them the most minutely lettered names; but the adept selects such words as stretch, in large characters, from one end of the chart to the other. These, like the over-largely lettered signs and placards of the street, escape observation by dint of being excessively obvious; and here the physical oversight is precisely analogous with the moral inapprehension by which the intellect suffers to pass unnoticed those considerations which are too obtrusively and too palpably self-evident. But this is a point, it appears, somewhat above or beneath the understanding of the Prefect. He never once thought it probable,

or possible, that the Minister had deposited the letter immediately beneath the nose of the whole world, by way of best preventing any portion of that world from perceiving it.

"But the more I reflected upon the daring, dashing and discriminating ingenuity of D——; upon the fact that the document must always have been at hand, if he intended to use it to good purpose; and upon the decisive evidence, obtained by the Prefect, that it was not hidden within the limits of that dignitary's ordinary search—the more satisfied I became that, to conceal the letter, the Minister had resorted to the comprehensive and sagacious expedient of not attempting to conceal it at all.

"Full of these ideas, I prepared myself with a pair of green spectacles, and called one fine morning, quite by accident, at the ministerial hotel. I found D—— at home, yawning, lounging, and dawdling, as usual, and pretending to be in the last extremity of ennui. He is, perhaps, the most really energetic human being now alive—but that is only when nobody sees him.

"To be even with him, I complained of my weak eyes, and lamented the necessity of the spectacles, under cover of which I cautiously and thoroughly surveyed the whole apartment, while seemingly intent only upon the conversation of my host.

"I paid especial attention to a large writing-table near which he sat, and upon which lay confusedly some miscellaneous letters and other papers, with one or two musical instruments and a few books. Here, however, after a long and very deliberate scrutiny, I saw nothing to excite particular suspicion.

"At length my eyes, in going the circuit of the room, fell upon a trumpery filigree card-rack of pasteboard, that hung dangling by a dirty blue ribbon, from a little brass knob, just beneath the middle of the mantelpiece. In this rack, which had three or four compartments, were five or six visiting cards and a solitary letter. This last was much soiled and crumpled. It was torn nearly in two, across the middle—as if a design, in the first instance, to tear it entirely up as worthless, had been altered, or stayed, in the second. It had a large black seal, bearing the D—— cipher very conspicuously, and was addressed, in a diminutive female hand, to D——, the Minister himself. It was thrust carelessly, and even, as it seemed, contemptuously, into one of the uppermost divisions of the rack.

"No sooner had I glanced at this letter, than I concluded it to be that of which I was in search. To be sure, it was, to all appearance, radically different from the one of which the Pre-

fect had read us so minute a description. Here the seal was large and black, with the D—— cipher; there it was small and red, with the ducal arms of the S—— family. Here, the address to the Minister was diminutive and feminine; there, the superscription, to a certain royal personage, was markedly bold and decided; the size alone formed a point of correspondence. But, then, the radicalness of these differences, which was excessive, the dirt, the soiled and torn condition of the paper, so inconsistent with the true methodical habits of D——, and so suggestive of a design to delude the beholder into an idea of the worthlessness of the document; these things, together with the hyper-obtrusive situation of this document, full in view of every visitor, and thus exactly in accordance with the conclusions to which I had previously arrived; these things, I say, were strongly corroborative of suspicion in one who came with the intention to suspect.

“ I protracted my visit as long as possible, and, while I maintained a most animated discussion with the Minister upon a topic which I knew well had never failed to interest and excite him, I kept my attention really riveted upon the letter. In this examination I committed to memory its external appearance and arrangement in the rack, and also fell at length upon a discovery which set at rest whatever trivial doubt I might have entertained. In scrutinizing the edges of the paper I observed them to be more chafed than seemed necessary. They presented the broken appearance which is manifested when a stiff paper, having been once folded and pressed with a folder, is refolded in a reverse direction, in the same creases or edges which had formed the original fold.

“ This discovery was sufficient. It was clear to me that the letter had been turned, as a glove, inside out, re-directed, and re-sealed.

“ I bade the Minister good-morning, and took my departure at once, leaving a gold snuff-box upon the table.

“ The next morning I called for the snuff-box, when we resumed quite eagerly the conversation of the preceding day. While thus engaged, however, a loud report as if of a pistol was heard immediately beneath the windows of the hotel, and was succeeded by a series of fearful screams and the shouting of a terrified mob.

“ D—— rushed to a casement, threw it open and looked out. In the meantime I stepped to the card-rack, took the

letter, put it in my pocket, and replaced it by a fac-simile (so far as regards externals) which I had carefully prepared at my lodgings—imitating the D—— cipher very readily by means of a seal formed of bread.

"The disturbance in the street had been occasioned by the frantic behavior of a man with a musket. He had fired it among a crowd of women and children. It proved, however, to have been without ball, and the fellow was suffered to go his way as a lunatic or a drunkard.

"When he had gone, D—— came from the window, whither I had followed him immediately upon securing the object in view. Soon afterward I bade him farewell. The pretended lunatic was a man in my own pay."

"But what purpose had you," I asked, "in replacing the letter by a fac-simile? Would it not have been better, at the first visit, to have seized it openly and departed?"

"D——," replied Dupin, "is a desperate man, and a man of nerve. His hotel, too, is not without attendants devoted to his interests. Had I made the wild attempt you suggest, I might never have left the Ministerial presence alive. The good people of Paris might have heard of me no more.

"But I had an object apart from these considerations. You know my political prepossessions. In this matter I act as a partisan of the lady concerned.

"For eighteen months the Minister has had her in his power. She has now him in hers—since, being unaware that the letter is not in his possession, he will proceed with his exactions as if it were. Thus will he inevitably commit himself, at once, to his political destruction. His downfall, too, will not be more precipitate than awkward. It is all very well to talk about the *facilis descensus Averni*; but in all kinds of climbing, as Catalani said of singing, it is far more easy to get up than to come down. In the present instance I have no sympathy—at least no pity—for him who descends. He is that *monstrum horrendum*, an unprincipled man of genius.

"I confess, however, that I should like very well to know the precise character of his thoughts when, being defied by her whom the Prefect terms 'a certain personage,' he is reduced to opening the letter which I left for him in the card-rack."

"How? did you put anything particular in it?"

"Why—it did not seem altogether right to leave the interior

blank—that would have been insulting. D——, at Vienna, once did me an evil turn, which I told him, quite good-humoredly that I should remember. So, as I knew he would feel some curiosity in regard to the identity of the person who had outwitted him, I thought it a pity not to give him a clue. He is well acquainted with my MS., and I just copied into the middle of the blank sheet the words—

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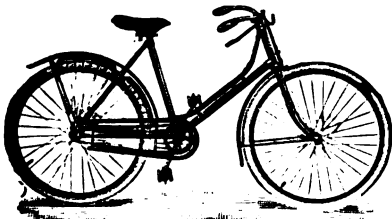
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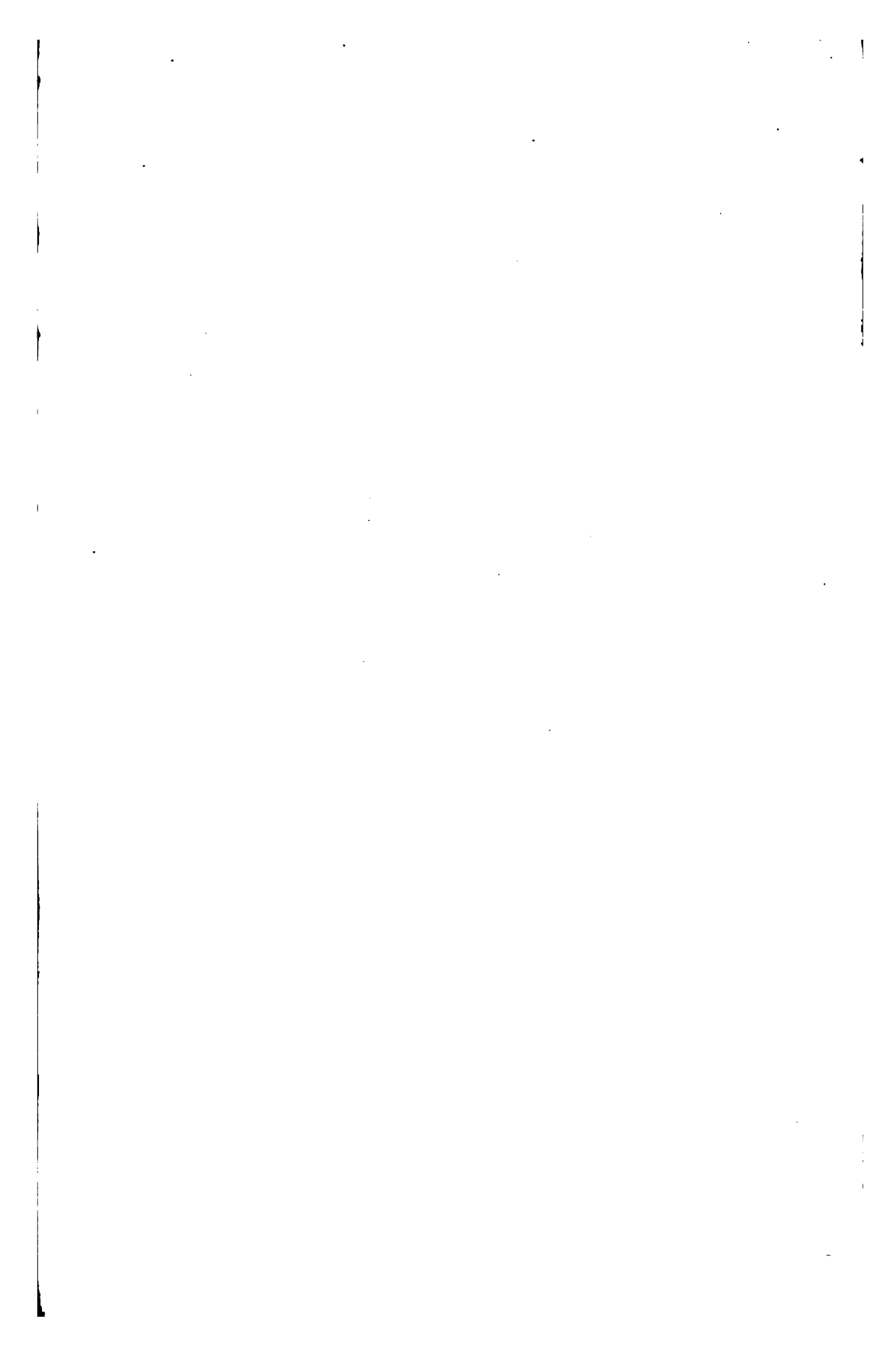
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